SANKARA
DIGVIJAYA

THE TRADITIONAL LIFE OF SRI SANKARACHARYA



MADHAVA – VIDYARANYA

SANKARA-DIG-VIJAYA

THE TRADITIONAL LIFE OF SRI SANKARACHARYA

By
MADHAVA-VIDYARANYA

Translated by
SWAMI TAPASYANANDA

SRI RAMAKRISHNA MATH
MADRAS-600 004, India

Published by
The President
Sri Ramakrishna Math
Mylapore, Chennai-4

IX-2M 3C-6-2008
ISBN 81-7823-342-8

Printed in India at
Sri Ramakrishna Math Printing Press
Mylapore, Chennai-4

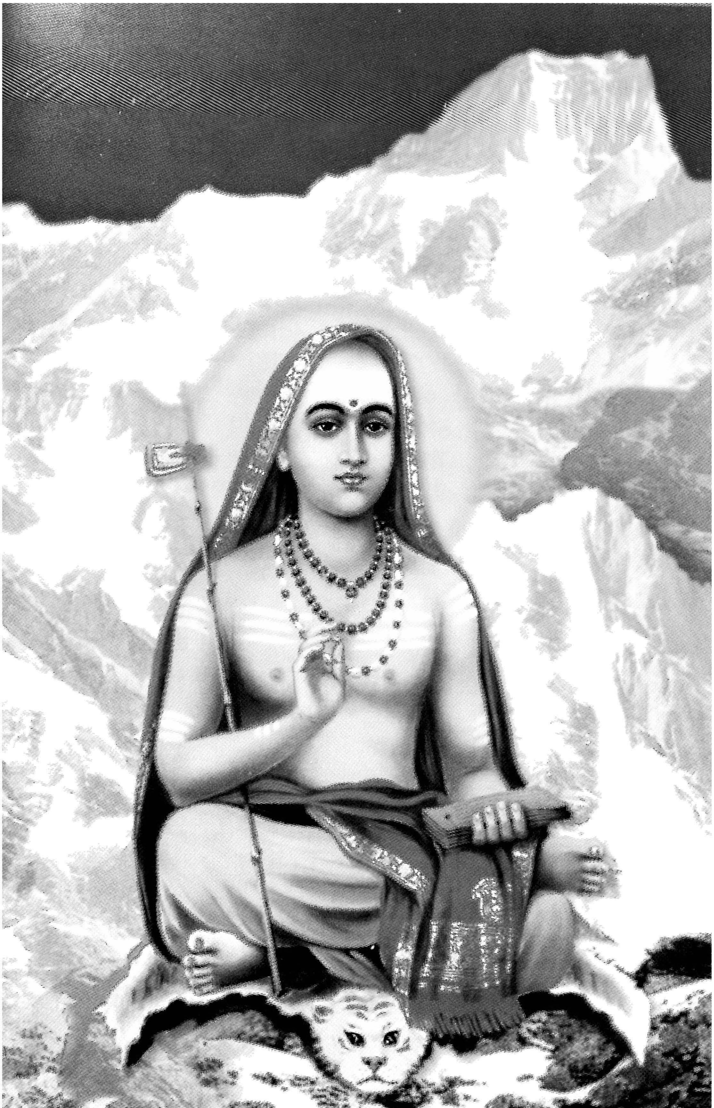
CONTENTS

श्रुतिनिगदितमार्गस्थापनायावतारं
जिननयबहुवादभ्रान्तिमुन्मूलयन्तम् ।
भुवनविजयख्यातिं शङ्करं भाष्यकारं
विमलपरमहंसं रामकृष्णं भजामः ॥

Śrutinigadita-mārga-sthāpanāyāvatāraṁ
jinanaya-bahuvāda-bhrāntimunmūlayantaṁ
Bhuvana-vijayakhyātiṁ Śaṅkaraṁ bhāṣyakāraṁ
Vimala-paramahaṁsaṁ Rāmakṛṣṇaṁ bhajāmaḥ

To the Holy Being Ramakrishna, the Spiritual Swan
sporting in the lake of pious hearts,
Who embodied himself as the world-famous
scriptural commentator Sankara,
By whose efforts the sophistries of
atheistic thinkers were uprooted
And the way of Vedic wisdom cleared
and well-established—
To that Universal Being as Sankara,
my Salutation !

—SWAMI ABHEDANANDA



INTRODUCTION

Problems Connected with a Biography of Sri Sankara

An Introduction to an English translation of Madhava-Vidyaranya's *Sankara-dig-vijaya*, known also as *Samkshepa-sankara-vijaya*, requires in the first place an explanation as to why it is undertaken. We are presenting this translation not because we consider it a proper biography in the modern sense, but because there is nothing better to offer on the life and achievements of Sri Sankara. Sri Sankaracharya is undoubtedly the most widely known of India's saintly philosophers, both within the country and outside, and there is a constant enquiry for an account of his life. It is not that there are no lives, or rather life-sketches of his, in English, written by modern scholars, but they are extremely unsatisfactory in giving any adequate idea of the great Acharya or of his wonderful personality— of how he was able to make that great impact on the conscience of India, which has remained unfaded to this day. Like a rivulet starting with great promise but soon getting lost in a swampy morass, these modern writings end in learned date discussions and textual criticisms, which give the reader a sense of learned ignorance, but certainly no idea of what Sankaracharya was like.

The trouble does not actually lie with these scholars or the accounts they have given of Sankara's life. It lies in the fact that there is absolute dearth of reliable materials to produce a biography of the modern type on Sankara, and the scholarly writer, if he is to produce a book of some respectable size, has no other alternative but to fill it with discussions of the various versions of the dates and of the incidents of Sankara's life that have come down to us through that series of literature known as Sankaravijayas, which vary very widely from one another in regard to most of these details. The generally undisputed features of Sankara's life seem to be the following: That he was born in Kaladi, Kerala, in a family of Nambudiri Brahmanas: that he left hearth and home as a boy to take to the life of a Sannyasin; that he was initiated into Sannyasa by Govindapada, the disciple of Gaudapada; that he wrote learned commentaries on the Vedantasutras and the ten principal Upanishads and the Gita; that he led a busy life travelling all over India

refuting non-Vedic doctrines and establishing non-dualism as the true teaching of the Vedas; that he left four principal disciples to continue his mission; that he rid the various Indian cults of the influence of debased sectaries and infused into them the purity and idealism of Vedic thought; that he established centres of Advaitic learning in many places; and that he passed away at the early age of thirtytwo at a place, the identity of which is yet to be established. When he was born; where he met his teacher; where he wrote his commentaries; what were the routes he took in his all-India journeys for preaching and teaching; who were all his opponents and where he met them; how and when he came across his disciples; what temples he visited or renovated; what Maths he founded or whether he founded any Math at all; where he passed away—all these are matters on which conflicting or widely differing views are expressed in the different traditional books concerned with him known as Sankara-vjiayas.

In a situation like this, a modern writer on Sankara's life can consider himself to have discharged his duty well if he produces a volume of respectable size filled with condemnation of the old Sankara-vijayas—which, by the way, have given him the few facts he has got to write upon—for their 'fancifulness, unreliability, absence of chronological sense' and a host of other obvious shortcomings, and indulge in learned discussions about the date and the evidence in favour of or against the disputed facts, and finally fill up the gap still left with expositions of Sankara's philosophy. In contrast to these are the traditional biographical writings on Sankara called Sankara-vijayas. All of them without an exception mix the natural with the supernatural; bring into the picture the deliberations held by super-human beings in the heavens; bring gods and dead sages into the affairs of men; report miraculous feats and occurrences; and come into conflict with one another in regard to many biographical details. Yet their very so-called fancifulness, the poetic approach of at least some of them, their mythological setting and descriptive details, have given some of them a fullness and impressiveness which are far more educative than the few bald details and the futile discussions on their obvious deficiencies that one comes across in the modern biographical writings on Sankara.

The contrast may be better illustrated by an analogy. Suppose

a few bones of a rare species of animal that lived in bygone times are obtained. A very learned discussion about the evolutionary background and the probable biological features of the fossilised bones can be instituted by biologists and anthropologists. A clever artist, on the other hand, can try to reconstruct the probable appearance of that extinct species of animals in some plastic material, based on the clues from the bony structures recovered. Now, in spite of the great erudition behind the first way of approach, it is the reconstructed model, despite its obvious fancifulness and imaginative make-up, that can give some plausible idea to the common man about that rare animal to which the bones belonged. The flourishing of a few bones and the learned discussions on them will leave no impression on the minds of any but specialists in the field. The attempted historical biographies of Sankara are just like the rattling of the few bones of facts available along with abstruse discussions about them, while the Sankara-vijayas are like the reconstructed model of the animal which may be fanciful but impressive and meaningful to the ordinary man. If we approach the Sankara-vijayas without forgetting that mythological elements have entered into them, they would enable us to get a much more vivid and flesh-and-blood picture of Sankara than these learned discussions on dates and on the credibility of various texts and some of the details contained in them.

The word 'mythological' is not used here in any sense of disparagement. A highly poetic and mythological narration of the lives of individuals or events marks the measure of the tremendous impact that these individuals and events have made on the racial mind of a people in those ancient days when correct recording was not much in vogue, and impressive events easily took a mythological turn. They are living traditions that transmit a little of their original impact to the generations that have come later, whereas pure historical productions are only like dead specimens and curios preserved in the corridors of Time's museum. The trouble comes only when mythological accounts are taken as meticulously factual and men begin to be dogmatic about the versions presented in them. In the mythological literary technique, facts are often inflated with the emotional overtones and with the artistic expressiveness that their impact has elicited from human consciousness, and we have therefore to seek their message in the total effect they produce and not through a cocksure attitude

towards the happenings in space and time. If we approach the Sankara-vijaya in this spirit, we shall understand more about Sankara and his way of life than through the writings of professors who disparage them for their defective chronology, their fanciful descriptions and their confusing statement of facts. Such being the position, a translation of a Sankara-vijaya is the only way to give some idea of Sankara, his doings, his personality and the times in which he lived.

Sankara-Vijaya literature

The translation given in this book is of *Sankara-dig-vijaya* or *Samkshepa-Sankara-vijaya* by Madhava-Vidyaranya. It is, however, to be remembered that this is only one of the following ten Sankara-vijayas listed on p. 32 of T.S. Narayana Sastri's *The Age of Sankara*: (1) *Brihat-Sankara-vijaya* of Chitsukhacharya; (2) *Prāchīna-Sankara-vijaya* of Anandagiri; (3) *Sankara-vijaya* of Vidya Sankara *alias* Sankarananda, otherwise known as *Vyāsāchalīya-Sankara-vijaya*; (4) *Kēralīya-Sankara-vijaya* by Govindanatha, also known as *Āchārya-charita*; (5) *Sankarābhyudaya* of Chudamani Dikshita; (6) *Sankara-vijaya* of Anantanandagiri (to be distinguished from Anandagiri) known also as *Guru-vijaya* or *Āchārya-vijaya*; (7) *Sankara-vijaya* of Vallīsahayakavi under the name *Āchārya-dig-vijaya*; (8) *Sankara-dig-vijaya-sāra* of Sadananda; (9) *Sankara-vijaya-vilāsa* of Chidvilasa; and (10) *Sankara-dig-vijaya* or *Samkshepa-Sankara-vijaya* of Mādhava-Vidyāranya. Of these, the first two, the *Brihat-Sankara-vijaya* and *Prāchīna-Sankara-vijaya* are supposed to be the products of the contemporaries of Sankara, their authors being the Acharya's disciples. Nothing can be said of this claim, as the texts are not available anywhere at present. Sri T. S. Narayana Sastri, the author of *The Age of Sankara*, claims to have come across what he calls a 'mutilated copy' of the second section, called *Sankarāchārya-satpatha*, of Chitsukha's work mentioned above. There is, however, no means to assess the authenticity of the claim on behalf of this mutilated copy, as it is not available anywhere.

Regarding the remaining Sankara-vijayas, while some of them might be lying in some obscure corners of manuscript libraries, there are only five of them available in printed form, and even most of them can be got only with considerable difficulty. These

are *Sankara-vijaya* of Anantanandagiri (quite different from the now defunct Anandagiri's work with which it is confused even by scholars), *Āchārya-charita* of Govindanatha, *Sankara-vijaya* of Vyāsachala, *Sankara-vijaya-vilāsa* of Chidvilāsa, and *Sankara-dig-vijaya* of Madhava-Vidyaranaya.

The Authorship of Sankara-dig-vijaya

We are taking up for translation the last of these, namely, Madhava-Vidyaranya's work, with the full awareness of its limitations, which may be listed as follows: It is not a biography but a biographical and philosophical poem, as the author himself calls it. There are many obviously mythological elements in it, like reports of conferences held in heavens, appearance of Devas and dead sages among men, traffic between men and gods, thundering miracles, and chronological absurdities which Prof. S. S. Suryanarayana condemns as 'indiscriminate bringing together of writers of very different centuries among those whom Sankara met and defeated.' But these unhistorical features, it shares with all other available Sankara-vijayas, including that of Anantanandagiri. Though Wilson and Monier Williams find Anantanandagiri's writing to be more authentic and 'less fanciful', it seems so only because, being a rather scrappy writing, more of the nature of a synopsis in modern Sanskrit prose, such fanciful features do not look highlighted in the way in which they do in a poetical and elaborate piece of literature like the work of Madhava-Vidyaranya, to which people will have to turn for the present to get some clear idea of Sankara and his doings. Ever since it was first printed in Ganapat Krishnaji Press in Bombay in the year 1863, it has continued to be a popular work on Sankara and it is still the only work on the basis of which ordinary people have managed to get some idea of the great Acharya, in spite of the severe uncharitable criticism[1] directed against it by several scholars. But it has survived

[1] The motives behind the criticism of *Madhviya-sankara-vijaya* and the scurrilous nature of the criticism will be evident from the following extract from page 158 of *The Age of Sankara* by T. S. Narayana Sastri (1916): "We know from very reliable sources that this *Madhaviya-Sankara-vijaya* was compiled by a well-known Sanskrit scholar who passed away from this world just about eight years ago, under the pseudonym of 'Madhava'—a synonym for 'Narayana'—specially to extol the greatness of the Sringeri Math, whose authority had been seriously questioned by the Kumbhakonam Math, the Acharyas of the latter Math claiming exclusive

all these criticisms, and will be studied with interest for all time as a unique historical and philosophical poem in Sanskrit on one of the greatest spiritual luminaries of India.

The criticism of it is uncharitable because it is mainly born of prejudice, and it has extended beyond finding fault with the text, to the question of its authorship itself. The critics somehow want to disprove that this work is, as traditionally accepted, a writing of the great Madhava-Vidyaranya, the author of the *Panchadasi*, and a great name in the field of Indian philosophical and theological literature. For, if his authorship is accepted, the book will receive a high status, which some schools of thought do not like for reasons of their own. In fact, except in the eyes of a few such biassed scholars, it has actually got that status at present, especially in the eyes of the followers of Sankaracharya in general; but this position is sought to be undermined by disputing its authorship on all kinds of flimsy and far-fetched grounds. Besides the support of tradition, the colophon at the end of every chapter of the book mentions its author's name as Madhava, that being the pre-monastic name of Vidyaranya. Before he adopted Sannyasa under the monastic name of Vidyaranya, he was known as Madhavacharya, and was the chief minister of the great Vijayanagara kingdom under its first three rulers. He was born in the year 1295 in a poor Brahmana family near Hampi in the region of the river Tungabhadra. His father's name was Māyana and mother's, Srimati. He had two brothers by name Sāyana and Bhōganatha. Though brought up in poverty, all the brothers became versatile

---

privilege of being entitled to the title of the 'Jagadgurus' for the whole of India as being the direct successors of Sri Sankara Bhagavatpada's own Math established by him at Kanchi, the greatness of which had been unnecessarily extolled by Rajachudamani Dikshita, Vallisahaya Kavi and Venkatarama Sarman in their respective works, *Sankarabhyudaya, Achraya-dig-vijaya* and *Sankara-bhagavatpadacharitra.*

"About fifty years ago, in the very city of Madras, as many may still remember, a fierce controversy raged between the adherents of the Kumbhakonam Math on the one hand, and those of the Sringeri Math headed by Bangalore Siddhanti Subrahmanya Sastri and two brothers—Kumbhakonam Srinivasa Sastri and Kumbhakonam Narayana Sastri—sons of Ramaswami Sastri, a *protege* of the Sringeri Math, on the other. We have very strong reasons to believe that this *Sankara-dig-vijaya* ascribed to Madhava, the *Sankara-vijaya-vilasa* ascribed to Chidvilasa, and the *Sankara-vijaya-sara* ascribed to Sadananda, had all been brought into existence by one or other of these three scholars, about this period, in answer to the *Sankara-vijayas* ascribed to Rajachudamani Dikshita and Vallisahaya Kavi."

scholars in all branches of learning. Bhoganatha took to the Order of Sannyasa in early life. Sayana and Madhava were the authors of many works on religion and philosophy. The famous commentary of Rig Veda, though a work of Sayana, was probably a combined work of theirs, for it is said in its Introduction: "*Kṛipālur-mādhavācāryaḥ vedārthaṁ vaktum udyataḥ*" and at the conclusion: "*iti Sayanācārya viracite mādhavīya*" etc.

For relief from poverty, Madhavacharya is said to have performed austerities at the shrine of Devi Bhuvaneswari at Hampi, but the Devi revealed to him that in that life he was not destined to be rich himself, but he would be able to help others to become rich. This was an indication of the great part he was to play in the political life of his times. In his fortieth year he became associated with the founders of the Vijayanagara empire—Hari Hara I and his brother Bhukka I—who began the consolidation of that State by 1336. He served under three successive kings as chief minister and built up the greatness and prosperity of that kingdom until he retired in about 1380 to take to the life of Sannyasa at the age of 85. He became the head of the Sringeri Math for a few years and passed away at the age of 91 in the year 1386.

The identity of Madhava, the author of *Sankara-dig-vijaya*, with his Madhava-Vidyaranya is further established by the first verse of the text, wherein he pays obeisance to his teacher Vidyatirtha. Vidyatirtha was the head of Sringeri Sankara Math during 1228 to 1333. He was succeeded by Bhāratikrishna Tirtha (1333-1380), the immediate predecessor of Vidyaranya, who in turn

Not satisfied with the above indictment. Sri T. S. Narayana Sastri gives the following bazaar gossip as proof of his contention on page 247 of his book, "The reader is also referred to an article in Telugu with the caption *Sankara-vijaya-karthavevaru* by Veturi Prabhakara Sastri of Oriental Manuscripts Library, Madras, published in the Literary Supplement of the Andhra Patrika of Durmathi Margasira (1921-22) where an interesting note about the author of the above mentioned 'Sankara Vijaya' (*Sanakara-dig-vijaya* of Madhava) is given. Here is an English rendering of a portion of that article: 'I happened to meet at Bapatla, Brahmasri Vemuri Narasimha Sastri, during my recent tour in the Guntur District, in quest of manuscripts. I mentioned casually to him my doubts regarding the authorship of *Madhaviya-sankara-vijaya*. He revealed to me some startling facts. When he was at Madras some fifteen years ago, he had the acquaintance of the late Bhattasri Narayana Sastri who wrote the *Sankara Vijaya* published in the name of Madhava i. e., Vidyaranya, and that four others helped him in this production. The importance of the Sringeri Mutt is very much in evidence in this Sankara Vijaya (not correct). Taking

succeeded him as the head (1380-1386) at a very advanced age. Thus, though not the immediate successor of Vidyatirtha, Madhava-Vidyaranya must have had his spiritual initiation from him in his pre-monastic life. The identity is further established by the poet Madhava's reference to his life in the royal court in the following touching introductory verses of his work: "By indulging in insincere praise of the goodness and magnanimity of kings, which are really non-esistent like the son of a barren woman or the horns of a hare, my poesy has become extremely impure. Now I shall render it pure and fragrant by applying to it the cool and fragrant sandal paste fallen from the body of the danseuse of the Acharya's holy fame and greatness, as she performs her dance on the great stage of the world."

Besides, the text is a masterpiece of literature and philosophy, which none but a great mind could have produced. But there are detractors of this great text who try to minimise its obvious literary worth by imputing plagiarism and literary piracy to its author. They claim that they have been able to show several verses that have entered into it from certain other Sankara-vijayas like *Prāchīna-Sankara-vijaya* and Vyaśachala's *Sankara-vijaya*. Though *Prāchīna-Sankara-vijaya* is nowhere available, T. S. Narayana Sastri claims to have in his possession some mutilated sections of it; but such unverifiable and exclusive claims on behalf of mutilated texts cannot be entertained by a critical and impartial student of these texts, since considerations other than the scholarly have entered into these criticisms, and manuscripts, too, have been heavily tampered with by Sanskrit Pandits. It can as well be that the

a copy of the *Vyasachala Grantha*, available at Sringeri Mutt, Bhattasri Narayana Sastri made alterations here and there and produced the Sankara-vijaya in question. That he was an expert in such concoctions, is widely known among learned men." The reader can easily grasp from this the scurrilous nature of the criticism, and the motives of the critics of this great work.

As a general criticism of these remarks, we would like to point out that a perusal of Vyasachala's work, (printed copies of which, published by the Madras University in 1954, are still available in a few liberaries), will clearly show that there are quite many verses common to both the works, but at the same time a comparative study will also show that Madhava's work is a much more elaborate and well-planned poem (with 1840 verses) while that of Vyasachala (with 1190 verses), though poetic, is scrappy and truncated in many of its descriptions and even incomplete in the narration of the main events of Sankara's life. While there are some common features, there are great variations also in respect of the subject matter treated in the two books. Under the circumstances a critic who makes the irresponsible statement

other Vijayas have taken these from the work of Madhava. Next, even if such verses are there, and they are demonstrably present in regard to Vyasachala's work, the author can never be accused of plagiarism, because he acknowledges at the outset itself that his work is a collection of all the traditions about Sankaracharya and that in it all the important things contained in an extensive literature can be seen in a nutshell as an elephant's face in a mirror. Is this not a general acknowledgement of dependence on earlier texts, and if quotations from them are found, where is the justification for accusing the author of plagiarism, unless the prejudice of such critics is accepted as sufficient reason?

Besides, it is forgotten by these critics that it is a literay technique of Vidyaranya, as seen from his other works also, to quote extensively from recognised authorities without specially mentioning their names, and that this feature of the present work goes only to establish the identity of its authorship with Vidyaranya. Comparing the text with Vyasachala'a work, it is obvious that many verses are common to both the texts. The author of the present work, however, seems to imply Vyasachala as one of the recognised authorities on this theme in the 17th verse of the 1st chapter.

There is also the view that the author need not necessarily be Madhava-Vidyaranya but Madhavacharya, the son of the former's brother Sayana and the author of *Sarvadarsana-Samgraha*, a masterly philosophical text. To make this hypothesis even plausible, it has to be established that this Madhava was the disciple of Vidyatirtha, which the author of *Sankara-dig-vijaya* claims to be in the very first verse of the text.

The authorship of the book is questioned also from the point of view of style. Now views on style can be very subjective, and when one wants to dispute the authorship of any work, the easiest way is to adopt this line of criticism. In Sanskrit there are various types of style, and accomplished men of letters can vary the style

---

that Madhava's work has been made by culling out verses from Vyasachala's must not have even seen the latter text, or prejudice must have obscured his power of judgement. All that can be claimed legitimately is that Vyasachala's work was one of the source books of Madhava's *Sankara-vijaya*. There is nothing derogatory in this to the literary credentials of the author, because he has at the beginning itself admitted his indebtedness to all the literature on Sankara known at that time. See also footnote to Verse 17 of Canto 1.

according to the topic they deal with. According to the scholarly traditions of ancient India most of the philosophic, theological and even scientific subjects were expounded in metrical forms, but the styles employed for these have necessarily to be different from that for pure literary and poetical productions. Most of Vidyaranya's other works are on high philosophical and theological themes, and if he has used methods and styles in such works differing from that of a historical poem like *Sankara-dig-vijaya*, it is only what one should expect of a great thinker and writer. That the author of this work has poetic effect very much in view can be inferred from his description of himself as Nava-Kalidasa (a modern Kalidasa) and his work as *Navakalidasa-santana* (offspring of the modern Kalidasa). So, difference in style, even if any, is not very relevant to the question of authorship, especially when the identity of the author is plainly mentioned in the book itself.

In place of taking the poet's description of his work as a production of a Nava-Kalidasa in the proper light, these hostile critics have in a facile manner concluded that the name of the author must be Nava-Kalidasa, though such a conclusion is against all internal evidence. No one has heard of the name of such a Sanskrit poet. They also safely forget the highly metaphysical doctrines couched in cryptic but very attractive style in the discussions of Sankara with Mandana, the upholder of Purvamimamsa doctrine, and with Bhatta Bhaskara, the exponent of the Bhedābheda philosophy. These discussions have drawn the unstinted praise of an independent critic like Telang. If Nava-Kalidasa, who forged this book and imposed it on Vidyaranya, was a mere poet—and an unknown poet at that—an explanation has to be given for the impressive metaphysical wisdom, the dialectical skill, and the Vedantic technique of exposition displayed in these chapters. The genius of the author of *Panchadasi* is clearly reflected in them. In philosophical profundity, in literary excellence and in non-partisan outlook, it is far superior to all other Sankara-Vijayas. In the light of all this internal evidence, the disparaging criticism of this text, questioning its authorship itself, can be attributed only to the prejudice of the critics.

Acceptance of Vidyaranya's authorship does not, however, in any way mean the denial of the mythical elements and the fanciful contemporaneity of various Indian philosophers found in it. These

features it shares with all the other Sankara-vijayas. Chronology and historicity did not receive much attention from even the greatest of Indian writers in those days.

Date of Sankara

Regarding the biographical details contained in different Sankara-vijayas, there are wide variations, as already pointed out. There is no way now of settling these differences, although they can give fertile ground for endless and inconclusive discussions for learned men. Under the circumstances, Madhava-Vidyaranya's *Sankara-dig-vijaya*, which has already stood the test of time and received recognition, may be taken as sufficient authority to give the layman much of the available information about Sankara. There are, however, three details of his life, which are highly controversial in nature, but to which we shall bestow some attention, not in the hope of arriving at any final conclusion, but to be appraised of the wide variations of views on them and the need, therefore, of avoiding dogmatic adherence to any particular view. The three points that are taken for a brief and inconclusive discussion here are: (1) the date of Sankara (2) what institutions he founded and (3) where he passed away.

Every date in ancient Indian history, except that of the invasion of Alexander (326 B.C.), is controversial, and Sankara's date is no exception. Max Muller and other orientalists have somehow fixed it as 788 to 820 A.D., and Das Gupta and Radhakrishnan, the well-known writers on the history of Indian Philosophy, have accepted and repeated it in their books. To do so is not in itself wrong, but to do it in such a way as to make the layman believe it to be conclusive is, to say the least, an injustice to him. It is held by the critics of this date that the Sankara of 788–820 A.D. is not the Adi-Sankara (the original Sankara), but Abhinava Sankara (modern Sankara), another famous Sannyasin of later times (788–839), who was born at Chidambaram and was the head of the Sankara Math at Kanchipuram between 801 and 839. He was reputed for his holiness and learning and is said to have gone on tours of controversy (Dig-vijaya) like the original Sankara.

It is found that not only modern scholars, but even the authors of several Sankara-vijayas have superimposed these two personalities mutually and mixed up several details of their lives.

The author of the concept of *adhyasa* himself seems to have become a victim of it! The cause of much of this confusion has been the custom of all the incumbents of the headship of Sankara Maths being called Sankaracharyas. To distinguish the real Sankara, he is therefore referred to as 'Adi-Sankara'— an expression that is quite meaningless. For, Sankaracharya was the name of an individual and not a title, and if the heads of the Maths of that illustrious personage were known only by their individual names like the heads of religious institutions founded by other teachers, probably much of this confusion could have been avoided.

In the light of the Abhinava-Sankara theory, much of the data on which Adi-Sankara's date is usually fixed by modern scholars lose their validity. The Cambodian inscription of Indravarman (878–887) which mentions the name of his preceptor as Sivasoma, the pupil of 'Bhagavan Sankar', can have reference only to Abhinava-Sankara. Next the 'Dravida-sisu' referred to in the *Saundaryalahari*, meaning Thirujnana-sambandhar, the great Saiva Saint who lived towards the middle of the 7th century, also loses its significance; for the *Soundaryalahari* could have been the composition of this later Sankaracharya, an obvious parallel to which may be found in the *Devyaparādha-Kshamāpana-stotra*, a work generally attributed to Adi-Sankara, wherein the poet speaks of himself as over eighty-five years of age– a fact that cannot be true of Sankara who lived for 32 years only. This confusion most probably extends to many minor works attributed to Sankaracharya, chiefly because of the custom of all heads of Sankara Maths being called as Sankaracharyas, a point discussed already in the previous paragraph. Another objection to the 788 A.D. theory is that Sankara refers to the city Pataliputra, as if it were a city then existing. But this city, which was one of the very ancient capitals of India, had been submerged by the neighbouring river long before 750 A.D. All these data show that the modern scholars' fixing of Sankara's date as 788 A.D.,[2] cannot be accepted as an unchallengeable certainty.

The modern scholars in fixing Sankara's date as 788 have totally rejected the traditional date derived from Sankara Math records

[2] Ullur S. Parameswara Iyer has pointed out in his great work *Keralasāhitya* that the sole support for the modern scholars' view on Sankara's date as being 788 A.D. is the following incomplete verses of unknown authorship:

and from Sankara-vijayas. Traditional Indian dates are suspect because of the multiplicity of eras, of which about fortyseven have been enumerated by T. S. Narayana Sastri in his book, *The Age of Sankara*. So unless the era is specifically mentioned, it is difficult to fix a date in any understandable way. Two of these eras are famous—the Kali era, which started in 3102 B.C., and Yudhishthira Saka era which started 37 years after, i.e., in 3065 B.C. The calculation according to the latter era is, however, complicated further by the fact that, according to the Jains and the Buddhists, the latter era started 468 years after the Kali era, that is, in 2634 B.C.

Sri T. S. Narayana Sastri, in his book, *The Age of Sankara*, argues the case for the traditional date, on the basis of the list of succession kept in Kamakoti Math and Sringeri Math, and what he has been able to gather from 'mutilated copies' of *Brihat-Sankara-vijaya, Prāchīna-Sankara-vijaya* and *Vyāsāchalīya-Sankara-vijaya*. Until authentic copies of these works are available, the information they are supposed to give is not acceptable. Nevertheless, he maintains that, according to *Brihad-Sankara-vijaya* and *Prāchīna-Sankara-vijaya*, Sankara was born in 2593 of Kali era (509 B.C.) and passed away at the age of 32 in 2625 of Kali era (477 B.C.). He also maintains that this is more or less corroborated by the succession list of heads maintained at the Kamakoti, Dwaraka, Sringeri and other Maths, with, however, one complicating factor intervening. The complication is that in the Sringeri Math list the date of Sankara's demise is given, according to Sri T. S. Narayana Sastri himself, as 12 B.C. and, therefore, his birth must have been in 44 B.C., or in 48 B.C., if he lived upto 36 years, as some hold. This one difference is sufficient to dismiss the evidence of the Maths, but Sri Sastri points out that the posteriority of the Sringeri version of the date can be accounted for by the confusion between the Kali and Yudhishthira Saka eras. (The Yudhishthira

---

Nidhi nāgebha vahnyabde vibhave śankarodayaḥ
Kalyabde candranetrāṅka vahnyabde prāviśad guhām
Vaiśākhe pūrṇimāyām tu śankaraḥ śivatāmagāt

Here the words of the first verse are the code words for the year 3889 of the Kali era, which is equivalent to 788 A.D. (It is derived as follows: nidhi: 9; naga: 8; ibha: 8; vahni: 3. Since the numbers are to be taken in the reverse order, it gives 3889 of the Kali era as the date of Sankara's birth, its conversion into Christian era being 788 A.D. Kali era began 3102 years before the Christian era.)

Saka era, according to Hindus, began 37 years after the commencement of the Kali era, while the Jains and the Buddhist writers calculate it as having begun 468 years after the start of Kali era i.e. in 2634 B.C.) It is held by Sri Sastri that in Mysore and the regions round about, the Jain influence was very great and the confusion between eras in this respect might have been widely prevalent also. Now, 44 B.C., the supposed date of the birth of Sankara according to Sringeri Math, might have been the result of the confusion of eras and calculations based on them. 2625 of the Kali era, the date of his death, must have been taken as referring to Buddhist-Jain era and then converted into Kali era by adding 468 to it, thus arriving at 3093 of Kali era (9 or 10 B.C.) as the date of Sankara's death. He accounts for the small discrepancy of 3 or 4 years by referring to a tradition in Mysore that Sankara lived till the 36th year. While this is an ingenious way of reconciling the difference, one has to admit that there are too many 'buts', 'ifs' and other suppositions to make it credible.

It is rather surprising to note that, while, as stated in T. S. Narayana Sastri's work, in the Kamakoti list Sankara occupied that Gaddi for three years (from 480 B.C. to 477 B.C.) and was followed by Sureswara for 70 years (477 B.C. to 407 B.C.), the Sringeri list maintains that Sankara occupied that Gaddi for six years (from 18 B.C. to 12 B.C.), and was followed by Sureswara for 785 years (from 12 B.C. to 773 A.D.).[3] During these 785 years, the Kamakoti list shows that about 33 Acharyas adorned that Gaddi. Such unbelievable inconsistencies have made modern historians totally

[3] After the publication of the first edition of the book, the following letter was received from the Private Secretary to the Head of Sringeri Math, Sarada Peetham, on the present view held by that Math about the date of Sri Sankaracharya: "Nowhere have the Sringeri Math authorities themselves given the B.C. or A.D. period. *The record of the Sringeri Math says that Sankara was born in the 14th year of the reign of Vikramaditya.* Compilers wrongly referred this to the era of Vikramaditya of Ujjain, which was originally called Malava Samvat and later in the eighth century A.D. called the Vikrama Samvat. This took Sankara to the first century B.C. and necessiated the assignment of around 800 years to Sureswaracharya to agree with the later dates. Mr L. Rice points out that the reference is not to the Vikramaditya of Ujjain but to the Chalukya king Vikramaditya who ruled in Badami near Sringeri. Historians opine that Chalukya Vikramaditya ascended the throne during the period 655 to 670 A.D. This reference seems reasonable, as Badami is not very far off from Sringeri. Further as Sankara and Sureshwara quote Dharmakirti, and as Kumarila Bhatta quotes Bhartrhari, the dates of Dharmakirti and

reject the evidence provided by the chronological lists of the Maths. So Sri Ullur Parameswara Iyer, himself a pious Brahmana, maintains in his *History of Kerala Sahitya* (Vol. 1 p. 111) that it is easy to prove that most of these Math lists have been formulated so late as the 16th century A.D.

But a still greater difficulty posed for such an early date as 509 to 476 B.C. for Sankara is the proximity of this to the generally accepted date of the Buddha (567-487 B.C.). Sankara has criticised Buddhism in its developed form with its four branches of philosophy. A few centuries at least should certainly be allowed to elapse for accommodating this undeniable fact. Sri T. S. Narayana Sastri is, however, remarkably ingenious, and his reply to this objection is that the Buddha's date was certainly much earlier. Vaguely quoting Prof. Wheeler, Weber and Chinese records, he contends that the Buddha must have flourished at any time between the 20th and the 14th century B.C. He challenges the fixing of the date of Buddha on the basis of the dates of Kanishka or of Megasthenes.[3a] The reference to Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador, who refers to the ruler to whom he was accredited as Shandracotus, need not necessarily be to Chandragupta Maurya

Bhartrhari being known, it is incorrect to assign Sankara to the B.C. period and to misquote the Sringeri Math record."

[3a] Kanishka's date is variously stated as 1st century B.C., 1st century A.D., 2nd century A.D. and 3rd century A.D. The relevancy of his date to the Buddha's date is that Hsuan Tsang, the Chinese traveller, states that the Buddha lived four hundred years before Kanishka. Some historians try to fix the date of the Buddha on the basis of this information as 5th century B.C. This view is not currently accepted, and the Buddha's date is settled on other grounds as 567-487 B.C. It is fixed so on the basis of Asoka's coronation in 269 B.C., four years after his accession. According to the Ceylon Chronicles, 218 years separate this event of Asoka's coronation from the date of the Buddha's demise. Thus we get 487 as the date of the Buddha's demise, and as he is supposed to have lived 80 years, the date of his birth is 567. According to R. Sathianatha Ayyar, the date of 487 B.C. is supported by "the dotted record" of Canton (China). The traditional date according to the Buddhist canonical literature, however, is 623-543 B.C.

Megasthenes comes into the picture, because he was the Greek Ambassador of Selukos Nickator at the court of Chandra Gupta Maurya (325 B.C.), who is described by him as Shandracotus. Now Sri T. S. Narayana Sastri, with a view to push back the Buddha's date, challenges this identification, and opines that this reference could as well be to Chandra Gupta or even to Samudra Gupta of the Gupta dynasty (300-600 A.D.), in which case the Mauryan age (325 to 188 B.C.) will have to be pushed

but to the king of the Gupta dynasty (300-600 A.D.) with the same name, or even to Samudra Gupta. If this line of argument is accepted, the present dates of Indian history will have to be worked back to about three to four hundred years, which will land us in very great difficulties, as shown in the foot note. Besides, arguments of this type are never conclusive; they can at best throw doubts on other theories accepted on uncertain grounds.

Without going so far as to challenge the accepted date of the Buddha, there is another opinion that assigns Sankara to the 1st century B.C. This view is held by Sri N. Ramesam in his book *Sri Sankaracharya* (1971). His argument is as follows: Sankara is accepted in all Sankara-vijayas as a contemporary of Kumarila. Kumarila must have lived after Kalidasa, the poet, because Kumarila quotes Kalidasa's famous line; *Satām hi sandeha padeṣu vastuṣu pramāṇam antaḥkaraṇasya vrittayaḥ*. Now Kalidasa's date has not been firmly fixed (first half of the 5th century A.D. according to some), but it is contended that it cannot be earlier than 150 B.C., as Agni Mitra, one of the heroes in a famous drama of Kalidasa, is ascribed to that date. So also, it cannot be later than the Mandasor Inscription of 450 A.D. So on the basis that Sankara and Kumarila were contemporaries and that Kumarila came after Kalidasa, we have to search for Sankara's date between 150 B.C. and 450 A.D. Now to narrow down the gap still further, the list of spiritual preceptors that preceded Sankara is taken into con-

---

further back into the 7th to 5th century B.C. and the Buddha (567-487 B.C.) too, into the 9th century B.C. at least. But Sri Sastri forgets that these contentions cannot stand, as the date of Megasthenes and of Chandra Gupta Maurya have necessarily to be related to the firm and unquestionable date of Alexander's invasion of India (326 B.C.). Megasthenes was the ambassador at the Pataliputra court sent by Selukos Nickator (305 B.C.), the Satrap who succeeded to the Indian region of Alexander's empire, which he had to give up to Chandra Gupta by a treaty.

T. S. Narayana Sastri's attempt to shift the Gupta period of India history, to the time of Alexander's invasion (326 B.C.) by equating Shandracotus with Samudra Gupta of the Gupta period, is a mere chronological guess-work without any supporting evidence, as against several historical synchronisms which compel the acceptance of the currently recognised chronology. For example, the Chinese Buddhist pilgrim Fahien was in India in the Gupta age, from 399-414 A.D., and his description of India can tally only with that period and not with the Mauryan period. Besides, the Hun invasion of India was in the reign of Skanda Gupta, about 458 A.D., and this event cannot be put on any ground into the B.C.'s when Mauryans flourished, even with an out-stretched poetical imagination. So we have got to maintain that

sideration. Patanjali, Gaudapada, Govindapada and Sankara—form the accepted line of discipleship. Patanjali, Sri Ramesam contends, lived in the 2nd century B.C., a conclusion which, if accepted finally (?), gives much credence to his theory. Now, not less than a hundred years can be easily taken as the distance in time between Sankara and Patanjali in this line of succession, and thus we derive the time of Sankara as the 1st century B.C., which has the merit of being in agreement with the Kumarila-Sankara contemporaneity and the Kumarila-Kalidasa relationship. The 1st century hypothesis has also got the advantage of tallying with the Sringeri Math's teacher-disciple list, according to which, as already stated, 12 B.C. is the date of Sankara's demise. Sri Ramesam finds further confirmation for his theory in the existence of a temple on a Sankaracharya Hill in Kashmir attributed to Jaluka, a son of Asoka who became the ruler of Kashmir after Asoka's demise, according to *Rajatarangini*. Asoka passed away in 180 B.C. and it is very credible that Jaluka could have been in Kashmir when Sankara visited that region, provided Sankara's life is fixed in the 1st century B.C. Further, Cunningham and General Cole are stated to assign the temple architecturally to the times of Jaluka.

Like Sri Sastri, Sri Ramesam also refutes the modern scholars' view of Sankara's date being 788-820 A.D. on the ground that this has arisen due to confusion between Adi-Sankara and Abhinava-Sankara (788-840 A.D.).

---

the Shandracotus who visited Alexander's camp (326 B.C.) and who later received about 305 B.C. Megasthenes as the ambassador of Selukos Nickator, the successor to Alexander's Indian province, can be none other than Chandra Gupta of the Mauryan dynasty (325 B.C. to 188 B.C.)

Further, historical synchronisms, the sheet-anchor of the chronology of Indian history give strong support to the accepted date of Asoka (273-232 B.C.), the greatest of the Mauryan Emperors. His Rock Edict XIII mentions, as stated by Sathianatha Ayyar, the following contemporary personalities: Antiochus Teos of Syria (261-246 B.C.); Ptolemy Philadelphos of Egypt (285-247 B.C.); Antigonos Gonates of Macedonia (278-239 B.C.); Magas of Cyrene (285-258 B.C.), and Alexander of Epirus (272-258 B.C.). They are referred to as alive at the time of that Rock Edict. In the face of such historical synchronisms all attempts to push back the time of the Buddha by several centuries in order to substantiate the theory of 509 B.C. being Sankara's date, is only chronological jugglery.

So the Buddha's date has to remain more or less as it is fixed today (568-487 B.C.). Sankara came definitely long after the Buddha.

Now this theory, unlike Sri Sastri's, has the merit of not disturbing the accepted date of the Buddha. It has also the support of *Rajatarangini* and the Sringeri tradition. But its credibility depends largely on the theory of 200 B.C. being the time of Patanjali and the acceptance of the Kumarila-Kalidasa relationship. If these are questioned, the whole theory falls. This is the case with most dates in Indian history, where the rule is to fix the date of one person or event on the basis of the date of another person or event, which itself is open to question. There are, however, several pieces of internal evidence that go against even this date in B.C.'s, as will be seen from the succeeding paragraphs.

Yet another, and in fact an entirely new, clue based on internal evidence and in contradiction to the above theories of a B.C. antiquity to Sankara, is given by Dr. A. G. Krishna Warrier, Professor of Sanskrit (Rtd) in the Kerala University, in his learned Introduction to his translation of Sankara's *Brahma-sutra-bhāshya* into Malayalam. He states that the Buddhist author Kamalasila has pointed out that Sankara has quoted in his *Brahma-sūtra-bhāshya* (B. S. II. 2-28) the following passage from the *Alambanaparīksha* by Dingnaga, the celebrated Buddhist savant: *Yadantarjneyarūpam tat bahiryadavabhāsate'* Dingnaga's date, which Dr. Warrier links with those of Vasubandhu (450 A.D.) and Bhartrhari, is fixed by him as about 450 A.D. But that is not all. The following verse of Dingnaga's commentator Dharmakirti is quoted by Sankara in his work *Upadeṣa-sahasri: Abhinnopi hi buddhyātmā viparyāsitadarṡanaiḥ grāhyagrāhaka-samvitti bhēdavāniva lakṣyate* (ch. 18, v. 142). This reference is from Dharmakirti's *Pramāṇa-vinischhaya.* Dr. Warrier points out that Dharmakirti is described as a 'great Buddhist logician' by the Chinese pilgrim-traveller, It-sing, who was in India in 690 A.D. The implication is that Dharmakirti must have lived in the first half of the 7th century or earlier, and that Sankara came after him. It means that Sankara's date cannot be pushed back beyond the 5th century A.D., or even beyond the 7th century A.D., if the *Upadesasahasri* is accepted as a genuine work of Sankara. As in the case of most dates in Indian history, the credibility of the view, too, depends on the acceptance of the dates of Dingnaga and Dharmakirti as 5th century and 7th century respectively, and that *Upadesasahasri* is really a work of Sankara, as traditionally accepted. Fixing dates on the basis of other dates,

which are themselves open to question, can yield only possibilities and not certainties.

Probable dates suggested by other scholars are also the 6th century and the 7th century A.D. Sankara refers in his writings to a king named Purnavarman who, according to Hsuan Tsang, ruled in 590 A.D. It is, therefore, contended that Sankara must have lived about that time or after. Next Telang points out how Sankara speaks of Pataliputra in his *Sutra-bhashya* (IV. ii. 5) and that this will warrant Sankara having lived about a century before 750 A.D., by which time Pataliputra had been eroded by the river and was non-existent. Such references to names of persons, cities, rivers, etc. in philosophical writings can also be explained as stock examples, as we use Aristotle or Achilles in logic, and need not necessarily have any historical significance. Dr. T. R. Chintamani maintains that Kumarila lived towards the latter half of the 7th century A.D. (itself a controversial point) and Sankara, being a contemporary of his, must have lived about that time (655-684 A.D.). It is also pointed out by him that Vidyananda, the teacher of Jainasena, who was also the author of *Jaina-harivamsa* (783 A.D.), quotes a verse[4] from the *Brihadaranyaka-vartika* of Sureswara, disciple of Sankara. This is impossible to conceive without granting that Sankara and Sureswara lived about a hundred years earlier to Jainasena who lived about the second half of the 8th century A.D.

Thus vastly varied are the views about Sankara's date, ranging from 509 B.C. to 788 A.D., i.e., more than a millennium and a half. Sri S. S. Suryanarayana Sastry's contention that "for discarding the date generally assigned, viz., 788-820 A.D., no sufficient grounds have yet been given," cannot stand today, since this date is proved to be the time of Abhinava Sankara. Nor have the upholders of this view given sufficient justification for their view, or disproved the objections raised against it. Under the circumstances, all these complicated discussions of Sankara's date culminate only in a learned ignorance. We have to admit that we have no certain knowledge, and it is, therefore, wise not to be dogmatic but keep an open mind. Most probably he must have lived somewhere between the 5th and the 7th century A.D., certainly much

[4] *Ātmāpi sadidam brahma mohāt pāroṣyadū ṣitam*
Brahmāpi sa tathaivātmā sadvitīyatayēṣate

earlier than the end of the 8th century, his generally accepted date by modern scholars.

Maths founded by Sankara

Which are the Maths or monastic institutions that Sankara founded? This is another question on which there has been much dispute. Traditionally, four Maths are supposed to have been founded by Sankara at the four regions of India— at Sringeri in the south under Sureswara, at Dwarka in the west under Hastamalaka, at Badari in the north under Totaka, and at Puri in the east under Padmapada. It is pointed out in the monograph of P. Rama Sastry on *The Maths Founded by Sankara* that this four-Math theory has been propounded first in Chidvilasa's Sankara-vijaya which, along with some other Sankara-vijayas, is, according to T. S. Narayana Sastri, a recent production and of little authority. It finds no support in the other Vijayas of its kind and perhaps not even in the more ancient Sankara-vijayas. Of course this view cannot be verified now, as the most ancient of these Sankara-vijayas are not available now. Leaving aside the unavailable Sankara-vijayas even most of the available ones, including those of Madhava, Anantanandagiri, Vyasachala and Govindanatha, do not hold any such restricted view like the four-Math theory. Madhava's *Sankara-vijaya*, though a butt of criticism by a large number of people who dislike its popularity, seems to be non-partisan, and maintains only that Sankara in his last days sent several of his disciples to preach the doctrine at 'Sringa-giri and other centres'. Though it gives special importance to Sringeri by naming it, it admits the existence of many other centres. Whether these were all Maths with resident Sannyasins is anybody's guess. Anantanandagiri, as also texts like *Sivarahasya*, mention Kanchi as one of the centres he founded— in fact, as the Math where he finally settled down and passed away, thus giving it special importance.

Under the circumstances how the theory of four Maths came to have such popularity has to be explained. It cannot be merely because of the mention of it in Chidvilasa's *Sankara-vijaya*. On the other hand, that text must have merely recorded the popular notion existing at the time. The theory seems to have originated from the fact that the Orders of Dasanami Sannyasins recognise and accept affiliation with only these four Maths— the Orders

known as Puris, Bharatis and Saraswathis with Sringeri Math; Giris, Aranyas and Vanas with Jyothi Math; Ashramas and Tirthas with Dwaraka Math; and Parvatas and Sagaras with Puri Math. No other Math is recognised by them. Now, if there were more Maths of Sankara, why have the Dasanami Sannyasins limited their affiliation to these four Maths only? None of the protagonists of different Sankara Maths have answered this question. The affiliation, no doubt, is only a nominal one, and these Sannyasins neither take Sannyasa from these Maths nor follow any direction or control emanating from them. Still the question of how they came to be thus affiliated has to be answered. The advocates of more-than-four-Maths have given no explanation. In fact, they have not at all taken into account the evidence of Dasanami Sannyasins, who have played a more active role in propagating the institution of Sannyasa and the Advaita philosophy than the Sankara Maths. From what time—whether it was from the time of Sankaracharya himself or in later times—the Dasanamis came into existence, cannot be ascertained now. Even assuming they came later, and also that Sankara started more than four Maths, their affiliation with these four Maths above mentioned establishes at least that, at the time these Sannyasin Orders took shape, only these four Maths were functioning effectively. The functioning of the Maths as also their popularity must have depended largely on the eminence of the Heads at particular times. But this does not preclude the possibility of other genuine Maths, unnoticed and unrecognised by Sannyasins, functioning among non-Sannyasin communities. Nothing more precise than this can be said about the question as to which are the Maths originally founded by Sankaracharya, or even whether he founded any Math at all. Different sectaries having varying traditions can stick to them with justification, provided they do not become too cocksure and dogmatic and deny a similar right to others who differ from them.

Where did Sankara attain Siddhi

The birth place of Sankara being at Kaladi is the one biographical fact accepted uniformly by all Sankara-vijayas except one in one of its editions. But the place where he passed away is disputed. There are four views on the question. According to *Madhaviya-*

Sankara-vijaya he went to Kedar via Badari after ascending 'the Throne of Omniscience' in Kashmir, and from there he entered into Kailasa, the realm of Siva, transfiguring himself into Siva's form. There is also a monument to Sankaracharya in that region to commemorate this event.

But this version is questioned by other authorities. On this controversy, it is interesting to read the following statement issued by Sri T. N. Ramachandran, Rtd. Joint Director-General of Archaeology of India:[5] "At Kedarnath, on the way to Badrinath, there is a monument associated with the great Adi-Sankaracharya which His Holiness Sri Sankaracharya of Dwaraka Pith visited some time ago and expressed a desire to renovate (the memorial). His Holiness issued instructions to scholars of all parts of our country to ascertain the place of the Samadhi of the great Adi-Sankaracharya. On this Sri Sampurnanand, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, and myself bestowed some thought.

"After having arrived at some conclusion on the point by mutual correspondence, we are of the opinion, that Kedarnath cannot be said to be the Samadhisthan (the final resting place) of the great Acharya. Yet it is a unique place connected with the life of the Acharya inasmuch as the great Adi-Sankara disappeared from amidst his followers while at Kedarnath. Traditions recorded in some works dealing with Adi-Sankaracharya point out to the fact that Sri Sankara went to Kailas from Kedarnath, brought the five Sphatika Lingas (Sivalingas made of crystal) and a portion of the *Soundaryalahari Stotra*, and repairing to the South, attained Siddhi (final end) at Kanchi.[6]

"The Memorial at Kedarnath should at any rate be kept intact, and it is the duty of all who profess any interest in the hoary Religion

[5] The matter that is quoted above is found as Appendix C in Sri N. Ramesam's *Sri Sankaracharya* (1971), and as Appendix II in the *Life of Sankara* in Malayalam by T. C. Narayana Sastri of Alathur.

[6] It is difficult to understand how an archaeologist and scholar like Sri T. N. Ramachandran suddenly changes his view about the Samadhisthan of Sankara, traditionally accepted as such, and confirmed by an ancient monument. He merely says that it is on the basis of some correspondence that he changed his views. With whom? What are the weighty arguments against the accepted view? We are left in the dark about all this. If it is the inconsistencies in the Sankara-vijayas, it is quite understandable. But Sri Ramachandran is definite in his conclusion without

and Philosophy of our land to join hands in the sacred endeavour of renovating the Adi-Sankara Memorial at Kedarnath, as chalked out by Sri Sampurnanand, the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, in his letter addressed to me: (Naini Tal, letter dated July 6, 1958). 'Dear Sri Ramachandra, Recently I had occasion to discuss the matter with the Sankaracharya of Dwaraka Pith also. In the first place the word 'Samadhi' is a misnomer in this connection. There is nothing to prove that Sri Sankaracharya died at this spot. All that tradition says is that he came to Kedarnath and, in modern phraseology, disappeared thereafter. So, what is called Samadhi is really not a Samadhi but a Memorial. I myself do not treat it as Samadhi and such proposals as I am considering, are based on this information. What I propose is that instead of the wretched structure that passes as a Samadhi, a new Memorial should be built in memory of the great Acharya. It should not occupy the place of the present construction which is in danger of being overwhelmed by an avalanche any day. It should be built at a safer place somewhere near the temple. I am getting a design prepared by our State Architect. The Sankaracharya of Dwaraka Pith has given me his support in the matter'. . . ."

This theory of Sankara having attained Siddhi (final end) at Kanchi is supported, according to T. S. Narayana Sastri in his book *The Age of Sankara*, by the following texts: *Brihat Sankara-vijaya*, Vyasachala's *Sankara-vijaya* and Anantanandagiri's *Sankara-vijaya*, besides the *Punyasloka Manjari*, *Jagat-guru-ratnamala* and *Jagat-guru-katha samgraha*. On this it has to be remarked that from among the above-mentioned Sankara-vijayas one has only Anantanandagiri's and Vyasachala's works available for

---

discussing the point at all. He merely accepts one of the traditions saying that Sankara disappeared from Kedara only to go to Sivaloka and return to the world of men with a number of Sivalingas to be established in several parts of India, and at last passed away at Kanchi. He also seems to be unaware of the fact that according to *Markandeya Samhita* and *Sivarahasya*, which are the authorities for this exploit of Sankara, it was from Varanasi and not Kedara that he disappeared to bring the Sivalingas. According to one of these texts, Sankara did not go to Kailasa, but Lord Visweswara brought the Sivalingas and gave them to Sankara at Varanasi. Anantanandagiri also maintains that Sankara went by air to Kailasa from Varanasi and returned with the Sivalingas. So according to all traditions Sri Ramachandran's surmise about the monument at Kedara is incorrect. So the mystery of that monument remains unexplained.

reference and corroboration. Sri T. S. Narayana Sastri, however, claims to possess some extracts of mutilated sections of the first of the texts mentioned, which is considered by some as the most ancient and authoritative text. But no one can be sure of, much less accept, the claims of these multilated manuscripts.

As far as Vyasachala's work is concerned, it is very clear that it does not support this theory. All that it says is that Sankara ascended the 'Throne of Omniscience' in Kashmir, (which some think is identical with Kanchi, as Govindanatha interprets it), and then went away to some place 'pleasing' to him (*ruciradesam*). The narrative part of the work abruptly ends with this, followed by three or four evocatory verses. So, what that place is to which he went leaving Kashmir or Kanchi, is anybody's guess. It is difficult to understand how Kashmir can be Kanchi. Even if Kashmir be Kanchi, it is sure that Sankara left it, according to Vyasachala. Among available Sankara-vijayas, only Anantanandagiri's gives clear support to this theory of Sankara attaining Siddhi at Kanchi. But whether that Sankara is Adi-Sankara or Abhinava-Sankara is again a matter of dispute in the light of the textual criticism of different editions of the work. The point is discussed in a later paragraph.

It is, however, to be noted that to the Madras University edition of Vyasachala's work is pasted, at the end, an additional page containing a new discovery by Pandit Polagam Rama Sastri on the subject, forwarded to the editor after the printing of the book was over. It gives five additional verses to be added at the end. The editor of the work had not found them in any of the manuscripts he came across, but Pandit Rama Sastri had discovered these extracts in Atmabodhendra Saraswathi's commentary on *Jagadgururatnamala*. The main purpose of these verses is to omit Sankara's leaving for *ruciradesam* (place pleasing to him) and make him stay at Kanchi. But strangely enough the interpolator forgot the whole context in Vyasachala's work— the incongruity of suddenly speaking of Sankara, who was in Kashmir, the northernmost region of India, being at Kanchi in the far south. Probably there is a missing link to be supplied hereafter. It is perhaps this confused situation that makes Govindanatha interpret Kashmir as Kanchi unhesitatingly in his *Acharyacharita*, to which we shall be referring hereafter. Govindanatha, however, does not allow him to stop at Kanchi, but makes him go further south.

Allusion has been made in a quotation given earlier to Sankara's re-emergence from Kailasa. This is the version of *Markandeya Samhita* and Anantanandagiri, supported also by Sadasivendra Brahman. According to this version, disappearing from the world of men from Varanasi for sometime, he re-emerged from Sivaloka in Kailasa with five Sivalingas and the *Soundaryalahari*, one of the great works on the Divine Mother attributed to him. He travelled all over India again on another Dig-vijaya and established these Sivalingas in different places and finally settled in Kanchi, where he attained Siddhi.

Describing this great event, Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan says in his Introduction to the Madras University edition of Anantanandagiri's text: "In Kanchi, the *mokshapuri*, Sankara during the last moments of his life directed Sureswara of the Indra-saraswati Order to send the Moksha-linga to Chidambaram and then transformed his gross body through Yogic process to subtle form, finally culminating in omnipresent consciousness that is absolute bliss." He quotes Anantanandagiri's verse, the purport of which is "Sankaracharya, the grantor of liberation to spiritual aspirants, is there present even today as the all-pervading consciousness." Dr. T. M. P. Mahadevan finds further proof for these events in the abundance of ancient sculptures of Sankaracharya in and about Kanchi as listed by him in the Introduction to the recently published Madras University edition of Anantanandagiri's *Sankara-vijaya*.

The attainment of Siddhi at Kanchi is further corroborated by *Sivarahasya*, a voluminous text of the Siva cult dealing with all the devotees of Siva, which is also quoted in the Madras University edition of Anantanandagiri. It has, however, to be remarked that, as pointed out by T. S. Narayana Sastri (pp. 287 of his work *The Age of Sankara*), there are conflicting readings on this point in different manuscripts of the text of *Sivarahasya*. In one it is: *misrān tato lokam avāpa saivam*. In another it is: *misrān sa kāncyām* In still another it is: *Kāncyām Sive ! tava pure sa ca siddhim āpa*. Evidently texts have been manipulated by interested Pandits, creating a very confusing and suspicious situation. This view cannot, therefore, be accepted as conclusive as some adherents of it seem to hold.

There are further insuperable difficulties in accepting Anantanandagiri's work as a proof of this theory at all. A little textual

criticism of the work will make the point clear. In the edition of it, recently published by the University of Madras under the editorship of Dr. Veezhinathan, the birth of Sankara is thus described: "In the beautiful land of Kerala, there is a prominent village called Kaladi, and at that place dwelt a wise man named Sivaguru, the son of Vidyathiraja. The great Siva, desirous of blessing the world, entered by his spiritual glory into his wife, who had become great and holy by her austerities. She bore a foetus whose splendour resembled the sun and it was delivered at an auspicious moment." This in main outline is in agreement with the version given by all literature on Sankara.

But the first ever published edition of this work gives an entirely different version. Below is given this version from the 2nd chapter of Anantanandagiri's *Sankara-vijaya* published by the Baptist Mission Press in 1868 under the editorship of Navadweepa Goswami and Jayanarayana Tarkapanchanana: "In the world there is the famous Akasalinga of Siva, the all-pervading Deity, in the place called Chidambaram. There many Brahmanas inhabited, and among them, in a family of very learned men, was born a leading Brahmana named Sarvajna. He had a wife named Kamakshi who was possessed of all auspicious qualities. By meditating on the Lord of Chidambaram, this couple had a famous daughter named Visishta, who from her early girlhood delighted herself by meditation on Siva and was devoted to the knowledge of the Divine. In her eighth year her father Sarvajna married her to one named Visvajit. But she, Visishta, always continued to look upon as her Lord (Pati) the Non-dual Being Siva installed in the Akasalinga at Chidambaram, and performed worship and meditation on Him with added and awe-inspiring devotion. Finding her to be of this nature, Visvajit (her husband) abandoned her and resorted to the forest to perform austerities as a hermit. Since then the girl Visishta pleased the Lord of Chidambaram by her wholehearted worship and meditation. That Deity, although perfect in every way, entered into the lotus face of that girl to the astonishment of all others who saw it. Possessed of that great and awe-inspiring power of the Lord, Visishta became veritably Ambika (Siva's consort) Herself. She was thenceforth worshipped and served by all, including her parents. As months passed, the foetus in her developed day by day, and after the third month, the great Brah-

manas did the appropriate rituals, taking the Lord of Chidambaram as Yajamana (in this case for the performance of the rituals which the husband of the girl is to perform). On the attainment of the tenth month, out came from the womb of Visishta the great God Siva under the name of Sankaracharya. At that time a rain of flowers was showered from the heavens, and the Devas sounded for long their musical and percussion instruments like Dundubhi and the rest."

Now, in Dr. Veezhinathan's edition, the above text is given as a footnote. He has not given sufficient reason for discarding it. From the rather unclear reference to manuscripts he has given in his Introduction, this version seems to be supported by five manuscripts (B.Mss.) and an earlier printed version published by Jivananda Vidya Sagara and printed at Sarasudhanidhi Press at Calcutta in 1881. He has not, however, referred to the still earlier Calcutta edition of 1868, quoted herein above, probably because the book was not available to him. As against this, he refers to ten manuscripts (A.Mss.) as supporting his version. Probably many of these manuscripts of both groups may be copies only, and from the numbers, their authenticity cannot be ascertained. Besides, several of them are not complete also. Dr. Veezhinathan, however, concludes that the texts maintaining Chidambaram being the birth place of Sankara form a later interpolation, on the basis of the citation of Achutaraya Modak and of an article of W. R. Antarkar on Anantanandagiri's text in the Journal of the Bombay University, September 1961. The discussion is in no way conclusive. Considering that equally great scholars unconnected with later controversies have adopted the other version so early as 1868, the importance of it cannot be so easily minimised. The Editors of the 1868 edition, Navadweep Goswami and Jayanarayana Tarkapanchanana, have stated in their Preface that 'their edition had been prepared in the light of three texts they could get—one in Nagari letters which was procured with great difficulty; another in Telugu characters procured with equal difficulty; and still another in Bengali alphabets made on the basis of the above texts'. There is no reason why this text should not be given at least an equal place of importance as the one edited by Dr. Veezhinathan. According to the text of the Calcutta edition, Anantanandagiri is giving the history, not of 'Adi-Sankara who was born at Kaladi',

but of a Sankaracharya 'who was born immaculately to Visishta of Chidambaram', who continued to live at Chidambaram itself, took Sannyasa there, and who went on Dig-vijaya tours that are entirely different from the routes that Adi-Sankara is supposed to have taken in several of the other Vijayas. This Sankara is very largely concerned with reforming the various cults that prevailed in the country and very little with philosophy. The controversy with Mandana, which is one of the most glorious episodes in Adi-Sankara's life, finds a casual mention in the form of a synopsis. In this, as also in entering into Amaruka's body and in the writing of the Bhashyas, the two Sankaracharyas are mixed up. According to the Calcutta edition also, he finally attains Siddhi at Kanchi as in the one edited by Dr. Veezhinathan. But the point that comes out of the Calcutta edition is that it is the 'Chidambaram Sankara, the son of Visishta', and not the 'Adi-Sankara of Kaladi' that attains Siddhi at Kanchi. So Anantanandagiri's text cannot be taken as a conclusive evidence or settled proof of Adi-Sankara's final resting place. It is only one of the traditions supported by some manuscripts. There is every possibility that this Chidambaram Sankaracharya is the Abhinava-Sankara, whom even modern scholars have mistakenly identified with Adi-Sankara and given 788 A.D. as his time. Besides, Anantanandagiri, the author, calls the hero of his work his Parama-guru (his teacher's teacher). This makes the matter all the more confusing. For, no one has recorded that Adi-Sankara or his disciples had a disciple called Anantanandagiri. Anandagiri (quite different from Anantanandagiri) was Sankara's disciple, and the *Prāchīna-Sankara-vijaya* attributed to him (a book quite different from Anantanandagiri's) is not available anywhere now. The point that we want to make out by these critical remarks is that it is not very desirable to take a dogmatic position on such points where no final view is possible with the existing information. The best that can be said is that it is one of the traditions.

Still another place which claims the honour of being the last resting place of Sankara is Vrishachala—the Siva temple at Trichur, from the Deity of which place he is supposed to have had his origin. This is the view of *Sankara-vijaya* of Govindanath, also known as *Acharya-charita*. Govindanatha, who claims his work to be based on Vyasachala's *Sankara-vijaya*, brings Sankara up to

Kanchi at the end of his mission and makes him assume the Throne of Omniscience there at Kanchi, which he seems to identify strangely with Kashmir. He does not, however, allow him to stop there. He takes him further to Trichur (Thiru-siva-perur), from the Siva-Deity of which place (Vrishachala) he had received embodiment. Sankara is supposed to have founded also a Math there, which continues to exist even today as Naduvil-madam, and spent his last days there until he was absorbed in the Divine Essence.

According to Govindanatha, Sankara, on realising that his last day had come, made obeisance to all the Deities in the temple and coming out, sat at a spot and contemplated on the glorious form of Maha Vishnu. Then with the mind overflowing with devotion, he recited a great hymn to Maha-Vishnu known as *Vishnu-pādādikesa stotra*, composed extempore by him. In the midst of this, his spirit left the body, and "merged in the Blissful Essence that is behind the disc of the Sun". Today a visitor to the Vrishachala (Vadakkunathan) temple at Trichur can see a raised platform with emblems of conch and discus in stone, marking the place where Sankara is supposed to have attained Siddhi.

This theory is criticised by Sri T. S. Narayana Sastri and others on the ground that it is the product of a Keralite with too much of local patriotism and is improbable. This, however, is only a matter of opinion. It is as credible or incredible as any other theory based on Sankara-vijayas. The theory only suffers from the fact that there have been no partisans to highlight it.

Its critics forget that Govindanatha claims that his work is based on Vyasachala's Sankara-vijaya. On this point Vyasachala only says that Sankara in the end went away to *ruciradeśam*—a place dear to him. What that place is, is anybody's gues. The place dear to him, can possibly be the Siva temple at Vrishachala from which he is said to have had his origin, as Govindanatha seems to interpret it. It may also be Kanchi, or Dattatreya-guha, or Sivaloka.

Another tradition is that Sankaracharya spent his last days in Dattatreya-guha (the cave of the sage Dattatreya). According to Chidvilasa's *Sankara-vijaya* this cave is in Badarinarayan. According to this text it was to Badari that Sankara originally went straightway from his home at Kaladi, met his Guru Govinda-

pada, wrote his Bhashyas and stayed until he started on his tour of philosophical debates and controversies. After all his life-work, Chidvilasa brings him back to Badari where he lives until he grows very old and decrepit (Jarjara-vigraha). Then Dattatreya leads him into his abode in a cavern there, from where he goes to Siva's region. According to *Guruvamsa Kāvya*, it was in Marathawada, at a place called Mahuripuri, that Sankara entered into communion with Dattatreya. This place is known today as Mahur, or Mahuragad. In the Central Railway, there is a line from Murthijapur to Yavatmal. Not far from Yavatmal is Mahur with a temple of Dattatreya.[7]

We have shown above the confusion prevailing about the place of Sankara's demise. The same extends to most events of his life, especially about the places where they happened and about the routes he took in his travels. The place of his birth as Kaladi, which is the most undisputed point in his life accepted by almost all the Sankara-vijayas, is given as different at least by one Sankara-vijaya, that of Anantanandagiri, in its Calcutta edition published in 1868. According to this edition he was born immaculately at Chidambaram as the son of Visishta, a theory that has already been discussed earlier. *Sivarahasya* calls the place of his birth as Sasalagrama in Kerala. One is at a loss to identify that place.[8]

Thus, not to speak of the place of his demise, even the place of his birth, which is the one biographical point on which all other Sankara-vijayas are agreed, is disputed at least by one version of what is considered today by many as an authoritative text, namely, that of Anantanandagiri, in its Calcutta edition of 1868. As pointed out already, this deviation is the result of confusing Adi-Sankara with Abhinava-Sankara, who might have been a native of Chidambaram. The same confusion might have entered into some of the other details connected with the hero of Anantanandagiri's *Sankara-vijaya*. For, as already pointed out, the

[7] From *Sankara-vijayam* in Malayalam, by T. C. Narayana Sastri, Alathur.

[8] If the word Sasalagrama were slightly amended as *Sasilagrama*, its identity with Kaladi can be easily established. Today the word Kaladi is pronounced with a lengthened 'a' as Kaaladi. 'Kaal' in Malayalam means 'foot'. Probably this lengthening of 'a' may be a modern development, and it might have been known in ancient days as Kal-ati, 'a' being short. Kal, with a shortened 'a' means in Malayalam 'stone' and the Sanskrit 'Sasila' (with stone) may be taken as its Sanskritised form.

custom of all the Heads of Sankara Maths being called as Sankaracharyas, as if it were a title, and not an individual's name, was the main cause of much of this confusion of biographical and literary details connected with Sankara. This confusion has got worse confounded by the interference with manuscript copies in the past by the adherents of particular Sankara Maths in order to enhance the prestige and supremacy of the particular institution, that patronised them. As a result, we have today only a lot of traditions about Sankaracharya, and he is a foolhardy man, indeed, who dares to swear by any of these traditions as truly historical and the others as fabricated. Choice in such a situation can only be subjective.

Unquestionable History of Sankara

In this confused situation, Madhava's *Sankara-dig-vijaya* has one outstanding superiority over all other available literature of that kind. As a poem it justifies itself as truly the product of a Nava-Kalidasa (a modern Kalidasa), as the author describes himself in his composition. And as a profound and penetrating exposition of some of the moot points in Advaita metaphysics, dressed in a poetical style that is as attractive to literary men as to philosophers, it can be described as a unique philosophical and historical poem. It has stood the test of time, and it will stand for all time, in spite of interested hostile criticism, which the author himself has anticipated and answered in the opening verses of the first canto. Whatever the uncertainties might be about biographical details, the historicity of Sankaracharya stands on the following firm foundations: In spite of all the differences among authorities on some important details of his life, the main outlines of it stand clear, as we have shown at the beginning of this essay. The differences in details only vary round these common factors representing different traditions. There is also his impress on most of the great temples and holy places of India, where he lived, preached, renovated edifices, and contributed so immensely to their holy traditions that his name and doings have become almost legendary, creating an image that has remained indelible on the Indian mind. Above all, there are his great commentaries on three source books of Vedanta, the *Vedanta Sutras*, the *Upanishads* and the *Bhagavad Gita*. Rightly does Dr. Radhakrishna offer the tribute of the

Indian mind to the personality of the great Acharya in the following most beautiful and effective words in his book on *Indian Philosophy:* "The life of Sankara makes a strong impression of contraries. He is a philosopher and a poet, a savant and a saint, a mystic and a religious reformer. Such diverse gifts did he possess that different images present themselves, if we try to recall his personality. One sees him in youth, on fire with intellectual ambition, a stiff and intrepid debator; another regards him as a shrewd political genius (rather a patriot) attempting to impress on the people a sense of unity; for a third, he is a calm philosopher engaged in the single effort to expose the contradictions of life and thought with an unmatched incisiveness; for a fourth, he is the mystic who declares that we are all greater than we know. There have been few minds more universal than his."

SWAMI TAPASYANANDA

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Madhava-Vidyaranya's *Sankara-Dig-Vijaya:* Anandasrama Sanskrit Series.
2. Translation of the above into Malayam, metre to metre: by T. Subrahmanyan Tirumumpu, P. O. Palikode, Kerala.
3. Anantanandagiri's *Sankara-Vijaya*: Madras University Philosophical Series No. 16.
4. —do— Calcutta Edition (1868): Baptist Mission Press, Calcutta.
5. Vyasachala's *Sankara-Vijaya*: Madras Govt. Oriental Manuscript Series No. 24.
6. Chidvilasa's *Sankara Vijaya Vilasa*: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's Research Organ, Vol. XXXIII, Nos. 1 to 4.
7. Govindanatha's *Acharya-Vijaya*: Published by K. N. Divakaran Nambudiri, 'Hari-Vihar', Fort, Trippunithura, Kerala.
8. T. S. Narayana Sastri's *The Age of Sankara*: M/s. B.G. Paul & Co., Francis Joseph. St., Madras-1.
9. S. S. Suryanarayana Sastri's *Sankaracharya*: M/s G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras.
10. N. Ramesan's *Sri Sankaracharya*: M/s. Bhavanarayanaswami Temple, Ponnur. A. P.
11. T. C. Narayana Sastri's *Sankara-Vijaya* (in Malayalam): M/s. Sitarama Kalyanamandapam Trust, Bank Road, Alathur, Kerala.
12. P. Ramasastrigal's *The Mutts Founded by Sankara*: B. G. Paul & Co., Madras.
13. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan's *History of Indian Philosophy*: M/s. George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London.
14. S. Sathianathier's *History of India*: M/s. Ananda Book Depot, McNichols Road, Madras-31.
15. Ullur S. Parameswara Iyer's *Kerala-Sahitya* (in Malayalam): Kerala University, Trivandrum.
16. A. G. Krishna Warrier: *Sankara's Brahma-sutra-bhashya* (translation in Malayalam): Kerala University, Trivandrum.

SANKARA-DIG-VIJAYA

CANTO 1

PROLOGUE

Prefatory Remarks

(1-17) 1. Offering my prostrations to Sri Vidyatirtha (my Guru), who is one with the Self of all, I am attempting to give here a clear and precise summary of the ancient literature connected with the glorious life of Acharya Sankara (or of the book named *Purasankarajaya*). 2. In a small mirror, even the big forehead of an elephant can be clearly seen. Even so, in this, my brief work, you will get the essence of all the extensive accounts about Sankara and his teachings. 3. The intensely enjoyable taste of sweetness is enhanced by the intervention of other tastes. Similarly, my literary endeavour, however defective, will only enhance the delectableness of what ancient poets have written on the subject. 4. May the great commentator Sankara accept the offering of my poesy even amidst the vastly superior writings on him by poets of old. For, did not Lord Mahavishnu, though living in the midst of the milk ocean, yearn for the milk offered to Him by the milkmaids of Vrindavana? 5. The great world teacher Sankara defeats even the thousand-tongued Adisesha by the sweet and constant flow of his words resembling a perennial spring in the nectar ocean. I am attempting to narrate the most delectable excellences of that world teacher – the great Sankara of transcending greatness and goodness. 6. Where is the glory and greatness of Sri Sankara, which, in a subtle fashion, spreads everywhere like the fragrance of jasmine flower, transcending the barriers of space and time, and where am I, a creature of very little powers and talents? In spite of this disparity, I am attempting this unequal task only because of my faith in the support of the merciful look of benediction that my Guru has bestowed on me. 7. By using my literary talent in this way, I am cleansing it in the waters sanctified by the glories of the Lord, and thus ridding it of the dirt it has accumulated through its deployment in the praise of mean and proud men whom wealth

has raised to the ranks of pretenders to greatness. 8. By indulging in insincere praise of the goodness and magnanimity of kings, which are really non-existent like the son of a barren woman or the horn of a hare, my poesy has become extremely impure. Now I shall render it pure and fragrant by applying to it the sweet and cooling sandal paste fallen from the body of the danseuse of the Acharya's holy fame and greatness, as she performs her dance on the great stage of the world. 9. May this grand poem, which follows the traditions set by the great poet Kalidasa, (or composed by the poet with the title of 'modern Kalidasa') be for men of culture and character a heavenly flower plant offering basketfuls of poetical flowers, with which they could perform with delight their worship of the great Sankara, who was none but the grace of Siva embodied as man! 10. It may be that this poetical work of Navakalidasa (modern Kalidasa), though artistic, lofty and meritorious, and though viewed with approval by cultured and scholarly men and holy personages, none the less meets with carping criticism at the hands of perverse scholars and evil-minded poets, just as the cow, a noble animal, meets with slaughter at the hands of barbarians (Turushkas). 11. But why speculate too much on these lines? There are numbers of liberal-minded men, always sporting in the stream of benevolence, and ready to value others' compositions as pearls, to whom I could dedicate this work. And above all, there are the great Sankara and my spiritual teacher, on whose gracious approval I can certainly depend. 12. There have been some who attempted to expound the glory of Sri Sankara, but were forced to give up the attempt after having written only two and a half lines on it. For, so deep and profound is the subject. Under the circumstances, am I not, in making this present attempt, like a daring but silly child lifting up its hands to catch the moon? 13. May my great spiritual preceptor continually cast on me his merciful glances, which are like the train of waves on the ocean of milk and which can make even the dumb eloquent (*mūkam vāchālayitum*). Nothing is impossible for one to achieve, if backed by the grace of the Guru. 14. May the merciful goddess Saraswati, whose glory even the great Advaitic teacher Sankara has sung, take her seat on the throne of my tongue and render it capable of such a tremendous flow of words, that it will put to shame even the sonorous sound of the flow of the Ganga cascading from the

matted locks of Siva engaged in his Cosmic Dance! 15. "How transcendent is the greatness of Acharya Sankara—and how petty am I! Why submerge in the ocean even the little reputation I have acquired, and efface it thereby, by making me do the impossible?" so saying, the frightened genius of every poet takes to wings when he applies it to the depiction of the glory of Sankara. O Teacher, so profound is Thy greatness! 16. There is the danger of the deer of my poesy becoming a target for a band of cruel hunters—that tribe of poetasters, who consider indulgence in recondite grammatical usages, in long-winded constructions, and in vocabulary lifted from the depths of dictionaries, as the hall-mark of great poetry. 17. But blessed are the readers of a poem whose hero is no less a personage than Sankara, the incarnation of the great God Siva; which is dominated by Santi (Peace), the most sublime amongst the poetic sentiments beginning with Sringara (erotic love); which is capable of bringing about the destruction of ignorance, the cause of transmigration of Jivas; and whose author is a poet of established fame like Vyasa.[1] The readers of such a work must consider themselves fortunate.

(18-26) The subject is treated in sixteen chapters, divided as follows: first, Prologue; second, Birth of Sankara; third, Earthly Manifestation of the Devas; fourth, Life-story upto the Age of

---

1. This meaning of the second half of the verse translated above is as interpreted by the commentator of this work. It is amenable to another translation also. The second half of the Sanskrit original is as follows: *Yatravidyaksatirapi phalam tasya kavyasya karta dhanyo vyasacalakavivarastatkritijnasca dhanyah.* It can mean: "Which is capable of bringing about the destruction of ignorance, and whose author is the blessed *poet Vyasachala.* Its readers too are indeed fortunate!" This is one of the many verses of Vyasachala's work quoted in this poem or found in both works alike. T. S. Narayana Sastri and others of his line of thinking make much of this verse for traducing this poetical work attributed to Madhava-Vidyaranya. It proves nothing more than that Vyasachala's poem is one of the source books of this poem—a fact admitted by the poet already in a general way in the very first verse when he states that his work is a summary of all the vast literature on Sankara. Indebtedness to Vyasachala is admitted also by Govindanatha in his *Acharya-charita*, another Sankara-vijaya. Vyasachala's must, therefore, have been considered as one of the authoritative texts, inspite of its incompleteness and other deficiencies. It has also to be noted that in many of his other works also Vidyaranya quotes extensively from well-known authorities on the subject without specially mentioning their names. Knowledge of the famous originals seems to be taken for granted. It is a feature of his literary technique. See Introduction.

Eight; fifth, Adopting of Sannyasa; sixth, Establishment of the Pristine Philosophy of Self-knowledge; seventh, Meeting with Vyasa; eighth, Controversy with Mandana; ninth, Establishing Claim to Universal Knowledge in the Presence of Saraswati; tenth, Acquirement of Knowledge of Sex-Love; eleventh, Encounter with the Fierce Bhairava; twelfth, The Coming of Some Disciples; thirteenth, Preaching of Brahmavidya; fourteenth, Pilgrimages of Padmapada; fifteenth, Triumphal Tour; and sixteenth, Accession to Sarada Peetha.

Spiritual Degeneration and the Mission of the Devas

(27-39) We shall now narrate for the edification of the good and the wise, the life-story of Sankara, hearing which even once, the mind of man is purified. The Devas once resorted to Siva, the Lord of the Silver Mountain, for seeking a favour, just as they approach the Icy Moon seated on the eastern horizon for the sake of Amrita (nectar). Believing that they could attain their end by the favour of Siva, they addressed Him thus with folded palms: "In days of yore, it was to favour us that Lord Vishnu incarnated Himself as the Buddha and diverted unrighteous men from contaminating the Vedic path, by preaching a new religion for them. But today, the country is filled with the heterodox followers of that religion, as night is by darkness. They are indulging in carping criticism of the Veda, declaring it to be just a fraudulent means of livelihood for a few, and condemning its teachings on the duties of Varnas and Ashramas as mere superstitions. As people have given up the orthodox Vedic path and become heretics, there is none to do the daily devotional acts like Sandhya, or to take to the life of renunciation. The mere utterance of the two syllables 'Yajna' will make them close their ears. Under such circumstances, who will perform Yajnas and other Vedic rituals? And how will we, Devas, receive the offerings due to us? The followers of the cults of Siva and Vishnu bear on themselves the emblems of the Linga and the Chakra, but they too have given up Vedic rituals, just as evil men abandon mercy. There is no form of humiliation that these infatuated men have not inflicted yet on the sacred Vedas, which are solely devoted to the revelation of the excellences of the Supreme Being. These are the Kapalikas who chop off the heads of good men to be used as lotus flowers for offering at the feet of

their terrific deity, the Bhairava. There are several other perverse forms of worship, too, that have become prevalent in the world. Evil men are spreading the harmful effect of these degraded practices everywhere. Therefore, for the protection of the world and for the happiness of the good and holy ones, Thou shouldst deign to eradicate the world of these vicious and perverse men and their practices, and re-establish the Vedic religion on firm ground."

(40-44) When the Devas had completed their submission, the great God Siva said: "Taking a human body, I shall secure what is good for you. I shall establish the Dharma, conquering all the leaders of the perverse paths. I shall produce a commentary on the Brahma Sutras, setting forth the true teachings of the Vedas. I shall do this, taking the form of a great Sannyasin, Sankara by name, accompanied by four disciples who would be like the luminous sun dispelling the darkness of ignorance conjured up by the acceptance of duality. Just like Mahavishnu, I shall embody myself on earth. All of you, Devas residing in Swarga, should also take birth on earth like Myself and assist Me in My mission. Thus shall your prayer be fulfilled."

(45-56) Having spoken thus to the Devas, God Siva cast his loving glance, so rare for any one to get, on his son Shanmukha (also called Skanda and Subrahmanya), just as the sun casts his rays on the lotus, helping it to bloom. And Shanmukha's heart swelled with joy at that gracious look, just as the ocean swells under the silvery rays of the moon. Gladdening the hearts of the Chakoras constituted of the Devas with the moon-light smile of His, Siva, the great God having matted locks, spoke thus to His son: "Dear one! Hear my words that are meant for the blessing of the world. The Veda has three strands in its comprehensive teaching —The ritualistic, the meditative and the gnostic. By establishing the sway of the Veda with its three-pronged message, the spiritual ideal can be preserved in the world. If the spiritual ideal is saved, society is saved. For, sound social organisation leading to the good of man is based on the spiritual ideal. Now, coming to understand My design and following My instruction, Hari and Sesha have already been born as the sages Sankarshana and Patanjali for the resuscitation of the middle section of the Veda dealing with meditation and have produced texts on Bhakti and Yoga.

And I have now promised to the Devas, as you know very well, that I shall undertake to rejuvenate the gnostic teachings which form the ultimate purport of the Veda. Now, you have to do your part of the work, and that is the revival of the ritualistic section of Brahma (the Veda) condified by Jaimini, and thereby gain the reputed name of Subrahmanya (promoter of Brahmanya), besides the commonly known name of Kumarila Bhatta, the preacher of the Vedic Karma-Kanda. In order to refute and confute the Buddhists who are attacking the Vedic teachings and to establish the Vedic way of life, you have to be born in the world. For your help, Brahma will be born as the scholar Mandana, while Indra will become the king Sudhanvan for the very same purpose."

(57-59) Shanmukha and Brahma gladly accepted the instruction of God Siva. Indra, too, embodied himself as king Sudhanvan and ruled the earth from his capital, which he converted into a veritable Devaloka (heavenly region). Though endowed with deep wisdom, he was apparently a follower of the Buddhist religion and a great patron of the Sugatas (Buddhists). But in his heart of hearts he was awaiting the arrival of Skanda manifested as Kumarila Bhatta.

Skanda as Kumarila

(60-71) In due time, Skanda appeared for his earthly mission as Kumarila Bhatta, whose fame for scholarship spread in all directions, as if he were an ornament to the four Dames constituting the four quarters. In his two commentaries, he elaborated the meaning of the Sutras of Jaimini, which briefly expound the ritualistic section of the Vedas; the immense light his second commentary shed, looked like the brilliance of the sun succeeding the feeble light of his charioteer Aruna. In the course of his triumphal tours of controversy, he once went to the capital of Sudhanvan. The king received him in all humility and showered all honours on him. Seated on a golden seat in the king's assembly, and illumining the place as Surabhi does the heavenly region of Indra, the sage pronounced his benedictions on the king. Hearing the cooing of a Kokila from the branch of a tree close by, the sage said to the king, as if addressing the Kokila: "O Kokila! How sweet is your voice! All would have heard it with delight had it not been mingled with that of the crows surrounding you—the Buddhists with

their harsh and discordant note of condemnation of the Vedas." The Sugatas, on hearing these words of insulting implications, became fiercely excited snakes trampled upon by a pedestrian. To feed the fire of their anger, the Brahmana scholar put into that fire, branch after branch of the tree of Buddhist teachings, which he cut piece by piece with the axe of his dialectics. The assembly hall, filled with Buddhist scholars having faces reddened with anger at the Brahmana's audacious words, looked like a pond of red lotuses lit up by the rays of the evening sun. The hall reverberated with the thundrous sounds produced by the disputants indulging in arguments and counter-arguments and abuses, as if the nether world itself was bursting from below. The mountain ranges of the Buddhists fell down with their wings clipped by the thunderbolt of the Brahmana sage's arguments. As if unable to bear the Buddhist scholars' appellation of "all-knowing ones", the sage made them sit defeated in argument, silent and motionless like mere pictures.

(72-77) Having thus humbled the pride of the Buddhists, the Brahmana sage now began to expound the meanings of Vedic Mantras in order to enlighten king Sudhanvan. The king thereupon said, "In wordy controversies, success and failure depend only on the learning of the respective parties. It does not really prove the truth of their thesis. I can accept the religion of that party as true, who can jump down unhurt from the top of yonder mountain." At these words of the king, all the scholars merely stood aghast looking at each other, unable to take up the challenge of the ordeal. But the Brahmana sage, with his mind concentrated on the Veda, ascended the mountain top, and declared: "If the Veda is the true scripture, my body shall not be hurt by this ordeal." With this mighty declaration, the sage jumped down from the mountain top, as the spectators shouted in wonder at the sight: "Oh! Is it king Yayati coming down from heaven on the expiry of the merits his grandson had transferred to him!" That best of Brahmanas now touched the earth as lightly as a bundle of cotton. Is it any wonder that the Veda protects one with whole-hearted faith in it?

(78-84) Hearing about this stupendous miracle, people came from all quarters, as peacocks come out of their nests on hearing the clap of thunder-clouds. The king's faith in the Veda was established by this incident, and he began to feel that association

with the evil Buddhists had led to his degeneration. But the Buddhists began to object: "This event is not proof of a religion. For, protection of the body in such situations can be secured by magical stones, Mantras and miraculous drugs." Feeling this contention to be mere perversity on the part of the Buddhists, the king was roused to great anger and came forward with a challenging declaration: "I shall now institute another test. I shall inflict capital punishment on the party that fails in it." The king then presented a sealed earthen pot with a snake confined in it, and wanted the parties to say what it contained. Both the Buddhists and the Brahmanas replied that they would give the answer next day, and retired for the night.

(85-94) The Brahmanas thereafter prayed to Lord Aditya all through night, standing in neck-deep water, and the deity appeared before them and instructed what they should say regarding the contents of the pot. Next day they went to the assembly hall of the king. The Buddhists also arrived with a ready answer to the king's question. They declared in one voice that the pot contained a snake, while the Brahmanas maintained that the content of the pot was Mahavishnu resting on His serpent-bed. On hearing the reply of the Brahmanas, the king's face faded like a lotus in a dry pond. Just then a divine disembodied voice was heard by all, setting their doubt at rest: "O King! What the Brahmanas say is correct. Have no doubt on the point. Carry out your promise." Obeying the disembodied voice, the king opened the pot, and was overjoyed to see in it the form of Vishnu, as Indra was on getting Amrita (nectar). Wondering at the strange transformation of what he had kept in the pot, the king's faith in the Vedas grew a thousandfold. He ordered the eradication from his kingdom of all who condemned and criticised the Vedas. He also threatened with dire punishment those officers who showed any hesitation in carrying out this order, however close he might be to him. Indeed, powerful rulers eliminate even friends and relatives, if they turn disobedient or hostile. Did not Parasurama kill his mother under such circumstances?

(95-98) Thus did the king, whom Skanda (Kumarila) converted, free the country from the menace of Buddhists and Jains, just as the obstacles in the path of Yoga are eradicated by a wise sage. And simultaneously, just as the light of the rising sun obliterates

the darkness of night, the preachings of the Vedic truth by that Brahmana sage reversed the pace of the ignorance produced by the heretical teachings. When the elephants of Jaina and Buddhist heretics disappeared because of the roaming lion of Kumarila, the tree of Vedic wisdom began to spread everywhere with luxuriant foliage. As the fire-born Kumarila was thus resuscitating the Vedic path of Karma, Lord Siva condescended to be born in order to save the world floundering in the ocean of transmigratory existence.

CANTO 2

THE BIRTH OF SANKARA

Sankara's Parents

(1-5) God Siva, the self-created and merciful Being, the destroyer of Cupid, manifested himself as His holy emblem, usually called Sivalingam, on a hill known as Vrishachala situated near the course of the river Purna in the Kerala country.[1] Coming to know of the divinity and greatness of that Sivalingam through a dream, a king called Rajasekhara built a fine temple to house the Lingam and made arrangements for its worship. In that region there was a prosperous village settlement of Brahmanas known as Kaladi. In that village lived a learned and pious Brahmana by name Vidyadhiraja, as whose grandson the divine manifestation of the great God Siva, the resident of the temple of Vrishachala, was to take place in due time. As a fruition of the piety and good fortune of Vidyadhiraja, a son named Sivaguru was born to him. He did very well justify his name, as he grew to be like Siva in knowledge and like Guru or Brihaspathi, the teacher of the Gods, in his power of speech.

(6-14) From early boyhood his life was spent as a Brahmacharin in the house of a Guru, a Vedic teacher, performing the duties of that stage of life like serving the preceptor, collecting alms, offering oblations in the sacred fire twice a day, and studying the Vedas. With the help of Vedic Mantras that one has learnt by heart, one can no doubt perform the Vedic rituals, but their meanings can be understood only by putting in special effort for that purpose. Though a difficult task, Sivaguru engaged himself in this study for several years. In course of time, when the teacher felt that his pupil had mastered all the Vedas with their meaning,

1. This Siva temple is identified with the Vadakkunathan temple of Trichur, which is traditionally called Vrishachala. But Purna, which is identified with modern Periyar, does not flow through Trichur. It flows through Kaladi, Sankaracharya's birthplace, which is about thirty miles away from Trichur. In this text the diversion of the river via Kaladi is a miracle attributed to Sankaracharya, which is described elsewhere in this chapter. Probably it is a geographical inaccuracy.

he addressed the student thus one day: "My dear boy, you have been staying here pretty long as a religious student. During these years you have completed the study of the whole of the Vedas with their meanings and the six auxiliary branches of knowledge relevant to it. Though you are devotionally inclined, it is better that you now go home. Your parents and relatives must be eagerly awaiting your arrival in their midst after these years of separation. So do not delay here any more. The texts on good conduct say: A wise man is one who completes even before midday what he is expected to finish only by evening, and by today itself, what should be completed by tomorrow. Besides, everything has got its proper time. For, what you sow out of season will not fructify in the same way as what you have sown in season will do. This is especially true with regard to one's marriage. Your parents must already be thinking about this question. Marriage is a problem which parents are naturally disposed to think about from the very time of the Upanayana of their sons. Every good parent wants to see his son married in proper time, because it is on the succeeding generations of male issue that the ancestors depend for their Sraddha food-offerings. There is also another compulsion in the matter. It is the dictum of the Vedas that all the rituals prescribed by them can be performed by a man only with a wife as partner and participant in them. Marriage is, therefore, unavoidable for a follower of the Vedas."

(15-20) To this Sivaguru replied: "O Master, what you have said is true in a general sense only. There is an exemption to the rule of the Vedas you refer to. It is also laid down in the Vedas that if a person, after his study of the Vedas, is full of the spirit of renunciation, he can take to the life of a Sannyasin directly from the life of a student itself. The Vedic rule that one should marry and become a householder applies only to those who are not endowed with such renunciation. For my part, I desire to continue my life in your Gurukula as a lifelong Brahmacharin equipped with the emblems of that state like the staff and the deer-skin, and performing fire-worship and the devout chanting of the Vedas. The married state looks attractive at first, but after a time man feels it to be a great infliction, devoid of any charm. O Master! why do you try to hide this universal experience by your learned remarks? True, by doing Yajnas in the proper way, one can get

the enjoyable state of heaven; but please note that this is secured only after subjecting oneself to great pain and suffering on earth in the performance of the Yajnas. Besides, the slightest deviation in observing the rigorous rules laid down for a Yajna might end in the total failure of the Yajna to produce the promised fruits like rain, progeny and the like. Wrong performance can have also a contrary effect harmful to the performer. If poverty makes it impossible for a householder to feed himself and give food to those who depend on him or come as guests, he will find himself in a hellish situation. Again, even if he has all his needs fulfilled, he will still hanker for more. Avarice has no limits. Happiness quits when avarice enters the heart. Goaded by avarice, a householder may go on accumulating, but all that can be lost in no time, and he will again begin his pursuit of wealth. Thus he rolls on in life."

(21-26) While the discussions between the teacher and the disciple were going on, the father of Sivaguru happened to arrive at the Gurukula in order to take his son away. With great difficulty the father somehow persuaded him to return, and after offering ample Dakshina (honorarium for service received) to the teacher, the father and the son went home. Reaching home, the son prostrated himself at the feet of his mother, and the mother had the feverish heat of long separation abated by embracing her son. For, the contact with the body of one's own child is more soothing than sandalwood paste or any other unguent. Relatives also gathered in large numbers to see the boy who was returning after many years of life at the Gurukula. The head of the family received and honoured them all according to their status and relationship. The father, whose name 'Vidyadhiraja' was justified by his vast scholarship, now tested his son by putting him many questions in the light of the Vedic standards of competency like Pada, Jada and the like. To these and the other questions put to him on the philosophies of Bhatta, Prabhakara, Kanada and others, the son gave appropriate answers with a smiling face, always bowing down to his Guru in his heart. The father was delighted with the son's proficiency in the Vedas and the other Sastras. It is but natural that a son's speech, which is always pleasing to a father, should be all the more so, when it is enriched with the knowledge of the Sastras.

(27-35) Now, on hearing about the extraordinary learning and noble character of Sivaguru, there appeared on the scene many a Brahmana with marriage proposals for him. Though there were parents of girls ready to pay huge sums as dowry, the father of Sivaguru at last decided on a match for his son with a girl of a very noble and reputed family. The final settlement, however, came only after some more of the usual higgling about the place where the marriage ceremony should take place—whether it should be in the bride's house or the bridegroom's. Finally, by common agreement Vidyadhiraja, the bridegroom's father, and Magha-pandita, the bride's (Arya's) father, fixed an auspicious date for the marriage ceremony and had it performed in the presence of a very large number of relatives. Well-groomed and bedecked, the newly married couple looked at each other, their faces charming with a tinge of shyness. They atained to the highest limits of satisfaction by each recognising his or her ideal in the other.

The Advent of Sankara

(36-45) After the marriage, it is incumbent on the householder to perform the daily and occasional rites laid down in the Vedas. For this, adepts in rituals were engaged to light up the three fires of the householder—the Garhyapatyagni, Ahavaniyagni, and Dakshinagni, without the maintenance of which no householder is eligible for the performance of Vedic Yajnas. Subsequently. Sivaguru performed many expensive Yajnas having the felicities of heaven as their reward. It is even said that getting accustomed to consume the sacrificial offerings of Sivaguru daily, the Devas lost all taste for their daily food of Amrita in their heavenly homes. By fulfilling through Panchamaha-Yajnas the wants of the Devas, Rishis, Pitris, men and subhuman beings, Sivaguru shone in the world like an earthly Kalpataru (wish-fulfilling heavenly tree), whose flowers formed the offerings he made for the satisfaction of all. Days, months and years rolled on, with Sivaguru continually engaged in the performance of rituals laid down in the scriptures, in the unbroken repetition of the Vedas, and in beneficent activities for the good of others. Beautiful in appearance, wealthy by all standards, deep in learning, patient like the earth, and free from pride, he lived the life of an ideal householder for many years. But still he did not have what every householder

should have—a son. All the blessings of life—fertile fields, abounding milch cows, plentiful wealth, well-built mansions, and hosts of loving relatives—all failed to give joy to that Brahmana for the reason that he had no children. Seasons and years passed in anxious expectation for the arrival of a son, but it looked like hoping against hope. So in a mood of great disappointment, he said to his wife one day, "What shall we do now? Half my adult life is over, and yet I have not seen the face of a son, the source of all happiness for men. Without a son, not only shall I be dying in a sense of futility, but I will be a liability to my father, too. Dear one, we shall be getting the disrepute of being childless. For, man's reputation is based on his issue, just as only a tree that flowers and bears fruits at the proper season receives the recognition of men."

(46-53) Hearing these words, his wife said: "God Siva is the Kalpataru for man. By supplication to him we shall get what we want. The story of Upamanyu in the Mahabharata is proof of this. God manifests to man through His images. Men think that divine images are mere inert things. But quite the reverse is the case. Inertness lies in the nature of unregenerate man." Accepting the suggestion of his wife, Sivaguru went to perform austerities and offer prayers at the shrine of Siva at Vrishachala, the Great God whose half is formed of his consort Uma, and whose matted locks bear the crescent moon as an ornament. Strictly observing the rules of purity and taking only fruits and roots, he spent all his time in meditating on Siva. His wife, too, stayed at Vrishachala, observing the rules of austerity. One day God Siva appeared to Sivaguru in a dream, and being propitious, offered to give Sivaguru whatever boon he wanted. On his praying for the birth of a son, the Great God said, "I grant your prayer, but you have to select either of these two alternatives—either an all-knowing and virtuous but short-lived son, or one who would live very long but without any special virtue or greatness." Sivaguru preferred the first alternative, and the Lord blessed him, saying that he would have a son who would be ranked as "all-knowing", but would have only a short span of life. He was commanded to go home with his wife.

(54-70) Waking up from his sleep, the Brahmana communicated the vision to his wife. Accepting the divine assurance with full

faith, both of them rejoiced very much and returned home with the conviction that a virtuous son would soon be born to them. As a form of worship of the Lord, they made liberal gifts to holy Brahmanas and feasted them. The leavings of these holy men were taken by the couple as Prasada of the Lord, whose power entered into them through the sanctified food they partook of. Subsequently, Sivaguru's wife became pregnant with a foetus that was charged with the spirit of the great God Siva. As her pregnancy advanced, her whole body became lustrous like a blazing sun difficult to look at. What wonder is there if in course of time it became difficult for her to move about, bearing within, as she did, the energy of Siva who is the support of all the worlds and who manifests in an eightfold form as earth, fire and the rest. It is not quite correct to say that Siva, who is all-pervading, came to dwell in this body now. He was already present in her, but now manifested Himself in this special form. She began to feel the contact of even tender and sweet-smelling flowers a burden. What then to speak of ornaments? A general lassitude gradually crept on her, making everything burdensome to her. Another psychological change, characteristic of women in pregnancy, came over her. Whatever was rare she would like to have, but on obtaining it, would immediately lose all interest in it. Thus the relatives brought many delicacies to please the expectant mother, but her interest in them would abate on hardly tasting them. Well the life of a pregnant mother is indeed full of ordeals. But this is only the general rule. To be the vehicle for bearing the Saiva energy should be a pleasure and a privilege, and philosophers say that the service of Siva is the means for the eradication of all suffering. In dreams she sometimes heard Vidyadharas praising her with great musical hymns, sometimes found herself riding on a big bull of milk-white hue, and at other times saw men worshipping the Deity and receiving boons.

Temperamentally very sensitive even to joking criticism in privacy, she now imagined herself to be a great controversialist seated on the throne of learning after having defeated the opponents of other schools of thought. Together with this, her sense of fraternity with the learned and the pious, her repugnance for all sense enjoyments, and her several other noble qualities now manifesting, declared the unique purity and greatness of the child

in her womb. The line of her abdominal hair, resembling the mossy growth in the rivulet of radiance that flowed to the navel after encircling her hillock-like bosom, shone as a unique Yoga-danda (Sannyasin's holy staff) placed there by the Creator himself for the use of the divine child within—as if to declare that he was a Sannyasin, even in his pre-natal state. In the guise of her two breasts for suckling the child, the Creator had verily made two jars filled with a new type of nectar that is Mukti itself. It looked as if the two breasts of the mother stood for the theory of difference and the thinness of the middle region for the doctrine of Sunyata (nothingness), and the child within were refuting and correcting these by the enlargement of the breasts and the abdomen caused by the advancement of pregnancy.

The Infant Sankara

(71-82) At the birth of the baby the planetary position was as follows: The Lagna was fully aspected by the benign planets like Guru. Mars, Sun and Saturn were exalted and Guru was at the zenith. It was an easy delivery, as if Parvathi were giving birth to Skanda. At the sight of his son's face, Sivaguru was drowned in a sea of joy. Somehow controlling himself, he proceeded to bathe for performing the post-natal rituals, and bestowed much wealth as Dakshina on pious Brahmanas as part of those rites. The holy influence of the new-born divine child manifested itself everywhere in strange ways. The lion and the elephant, the tiger and the deer, the rat and the snake—these and such other mutually antagonistic creatures gave up their enmity, united as comrades, and even stroked and scratched one another's bodies in their newly developed friendship. The trees shed luscious fruits, creepers rained flowers, streamlets brimmed with clear crystal water, clouds burst into showers, and waterfalls cascaded from mountain ranges. Books contrary to the Advaita doctrine tumbled down from the hands of scholars teaching them. The face of Vedic revelation beamed with joy, while the lotus of the heart of Vyasa—the great Vyasa who codified and expounded the Veda—bloomed. The four quarters became clear and were filled with a gentle breeze conveying the fragrance of flowers. The flames of sacrificial fires rose high and bright. From the heavens the Devas rained fragrant flowers, which were as pure and lovely as the hearts of good men,

in order to honour this advent of Siva's incarnation; and the blessed mother with the child in her arms shone like the sky with the brilliant sun, or like the earth with mount Meru, or like knowledge in the hands of scholars endowed with humility. The learned astrologers, who were received with honour by the head of the family, made the following prediction about the child's future:

"This child will grow into a scholar capable of defeating any opponent in debate. He will be the promulgator of a new philosophy. He will gain recognition as a master of all learning. His reputation will last as long as the world exists. This child will indeed be a perfect man. What more can we say!" About his lifespan no question was put and no prediction was made also. For, virtuous men never speak words that cause pain. A large number of ladies of related and friendly families assembled near the confinement room and saw the face of the infant with the same joy and relief people feel on seeing the cool rising moon on a hot summer night. The light kept in the room at night was rendered quite dim and invisible by the brilliance of the infant, so that visiting ladies wondered how the room was lit up without any lamp at all.

(83-93) Sivaguru named the child as Sankara to indicate that he is the bestower (*kara*) of happiness (*sam*) to all who resort to him, or may be, to commemorate the fact that he was born out of Sankara's (Siva's) grace bestowed on him as a result of long observance of austerity and prayers. Though the child was all-knowing and possessing all powers, he none the less passed through all the usual stages of an infant's growth. He smiled, he kicked his legs, he turned on his abdomen. The sight of him in his cradle filled the hearts of good men with joy, while it brought gloom on the face of proud and argumentative scholars. While he lay on a soft bed and kicked at the cradle sides with his infant legs, it looked as if the hopes of all dualistic scholars was being shattered to pieces. When the child began to lisp two or three syllables, the dualists became silent, and when he started standing up and taking a few steps with a smiling face, those heroes took fright and ran away helter skelter in all directions. The Kokila found a rival in the sweetness of the infant's prattle, while the swan felt abashed when it saw the beauty of his steps.

When the child began to toddle, the ground looked as if it were

covered with saffron and coral bits, being coloured with the pinkish tinge of the infant's feet blended with his moon-like bodily lustre. The enlightened men could see in that child the reflection of Siva's form with the crescent moon in its locks, the third eye in the forehead, the trident resting on the shoulder, and the body sparkling like crystal. His infant body gradually grew in size like the affluence of a virtuous ruler, the fame of a diligent scholar, and the disc of the waxing moon. With unwinking eyes men gazed at the picture they saw in the child of the Siva form with the crescent moon on the head, the serpent round the chest, the Chamara mark on the sole, and emblems like Damaru and the trident in the palms.

Thus, when in the course of time, confusion had set in the minds of men regarding the values of life, when the path to heaven was disturbed and the way to Moksha closed, when the whole species of man had degenerated as never before and utter doom was about to overtake mankind, came this manifestation of Siva as Sankaracharya.

CANTO 3

THE EARTHLY MANIFESTATION OF DEVAS

The Antecedents of Mandana

(1-8) While God Siva, the crescent-crested, thus took birth on earth, many other Divinities also embodied themselves as offspring in the houses of learned Brahmana scholars. Mahavishnu was born as the son of a learned Brahmana named Vimala and came to be known as Padmapada (having in early life the name of Sanandana), before whom no scholar could keep up his reputation for scholarship. The deity Vayu took birth as the son of the fanatical ritualist Prabhakara under the name of Hastamalaka who always humbled the pride of his opponents. By a tenth of his being, the deity of Fire became Totaka, the sea of whose reputation was deep enough to drown the earth and whose mission was to pulverize the arguments of all opponents who faced him. Totaka, the terror of his antagonists, was known in his early life as Udanka, the son of Silada. Brahma was born as Mandana (known in his early life as Viswarupa), Ganesa as Anandagiri, and Varuna as Chitsukha. Some hold that Sanandana, who is the same as Padmapada, was an incarnation of Aruna and not of Vishnu as stated earlier. Many other Devas also were born as the sons of learned Brahmanas in order to be of service to the Lord in his world-saving mission. There is also a view that Mandana (described earlier as a manifestation of Brahma) was Brihaspati, the teacher of the gods, who was cursed in anger by Brahma for writing the text of the philosophy of materialism known after Charvaka; also that Anandagiri was the incarnation of Nandi, the bull of Siva.

(9-16) To become the wife of Mandana in future, Saraswati was born on earth as Bharati (later known as Ubhaya-Bharati) under the influence of a curse for a misdeed of hers. It is said that in the assembly of Brahma, the sages were once chanting the Veda when the choleric sage Durvasas, who also happened to be in the company of the chanters, uttered the Vedic Mantras out of tune. Saraswati, the consort of Brahma and the goddess of learning, thereupon laughed at the sage, who was roused to great wrath by this insult. Looking fiercely at Saraswati, he cursed her to be born on earth as a human being. The Goddess in deep distress

fell weeping at the feet of the sage and pleaded for mercy. At this plea of the Goddess, supplemented by the request of all the other sages to view the mistake leniently as the transgression of a daughter, the sage said to Saraswati: "You shall be free from the curse when you happen to meet God Siva in his incarnation as the Sannyasin Sankara." The stroke of destiny being irrevocable, she was born on earth in a Brahmana family on the bank of the Sona and grew to be the centre of all virtues and all learning. Astonishing all, she acquired even in her girlhood mastery of all the Vedas and the Sastras as also of all other branches of learning.

Marriage of Mandana and Bharati

(17-24) From the reports of Brahmanas, Bharati (for that was her name) happened to hear much about the attractive personality and the vast learning of Viswarupa (known also as Mandana), as Viswarupa also did, of that learned lady. In this way each developed an attraction for the other, which becoming intensified, they began to visualise and converse with each other in dream while suffering from intense pangs of separation in their waking life. Thus, even without seeing each other, but merely hearing accounts from others, they became engrossed in mutual love. In course of time, the obsession of love deprived them of sleep and interest in food, until their bodies became so weak and lean that their condition came to the notice of their parents. The parents of Viswarupa began to ask: "Why are you so weak? What has happened to your natural sprightliness? We do not notice symptoms of any disease in you. Such weakness can come on a person only in a state of separation from a dear one, or in the wake of some calamity. As there is no such circumstance attendant on you, we cannot attribute your condition to such causes. But how can a result occur without a cause? To think of other possiblities: Your proper age for marriage has not yet passed, and there can be no worry on that account. You do not suffer from poverty or insult. To us there is the burden of the heavy family responsibility, but you have none. You have no lack of learning, nor can you suffer from any humiliation of defeat in argument, as your scholarship is so vast and your mastery of the sophist's art so unrivalled. You have no burden of sin oppressing you, as even in your dream you have not strayed from the

righteous path. There can, therefore, be no fear of hell also. Why then should your face lose its lustre day by day?"

(25-42) To the earnest and persistent enquiry of the parents Viswarupa at last replied one day: "I am rather hesitant to speak out, but I am bound to do so, as you are so anxiously and persistently questioning me. In the house of a Brahmana inhabiting a village on the banks of the Sona, there is his only daughter noted for her beauty, character and learning. It is my desire that I should get her as my wife." Viswarupa's father thereupon sent to Sonapura two Brahmanas noted for their skill in negotiations. After a long journey through various countries, they reached the house of the particular Brahmana, the father of Bharati. Shortly before the arrival of these messengers at the house, a conversation was going on there between Bharati and her father who put her questions on her failing health, to which the daughter replied: "In the capital city there is a famous Brahmana, learned in all Sastras, named Viswarupa. I wish to marry him. O father, I seek your kind favour in this respect." On the arrival of these two messengers, dressed in pure white and carrying staffs in hand, they were courteously received by the Brahmana and questioned about the object of their mission. The messengers thereupon said: "Sent by Hima Mitra, the father of Viswarupa, we have come here to ask for the hand of your daughter in marriage for his son Viswarupa. From the point of view of age, family tradition and character, your daughter and his son are pre-eminently suited to each other to be partners in life." To this the Brahmana replied: "To me this marriage proposal is quite acceptable. But I have to consult my wife. She is the final arbiter in a marriage proposal for her daughter. In case I settle the matter without her concurrence, she will blame me if anything goes wrong afterwards." On consultation by her husband, the lady said: "These people are coming from the capital city of the king of Kashmir. Think twice before giving them your word, so that we may not have to go back upon it afterwards. They are strangers coming from a distant land, and we know nothing about them. The practice as also the statement of the Sastras on marriage proposals is this—a daughter should be given in marriage after due consideration of the seven following points: family tradition, character, age, form, learning, wealth and guardianship. Nothing else need be taken into account."

To this the Brahmana replied, "It will not be possible to take all these matters into consideration in regard to this proposal. Did not the king of Kundina bestow his daughter Rukmini on Krishna who was only a casual visitor to his capital and who belonged to the Yadu clan that was not high in the social scale? He made a decision without taking any of these matters into consideration. Don't you think that this and our case are analogous? This Viswarupa is a disciple of Kumarila Bhatta, who is responsible for reinstating the Vedic religion after defeating the Jains and Buddhists in debates. What more recommendation does he require? The wealth of a Brahmana is his learning, not his material assets. The wealth of learning accompanies a person everywhere. It is free from the depradations of thieves and harlots. On the other hand, material wealth has many disadvantages. Money is ever rolling; it comes and goes. It has to be safely guarded. It makes you go after women. Thieves, kings and relatives are constantly after plundering it from you. Constant worry is the lot of a wealthy man. Some bury their wealth underground, considering it a safe deposit vault. But others, coming to know of the secret, knock it off; or if the spot is on a river bank, flood may carry it off. The Sastras also say that girls should not be kept too long in the father's house. They should be given in marriage at an early age." To this the Brahmana's wife replied: "Enough of arguments. Please communicate the matter to our daughter. If she accepts the proposal, let it be implemented." On the Brahmana doing so, the girl's word of acceptance came readily, preceded by the expression of her intense joy in her beaming face and horripilations all over the body.

(43-60) Finding the daughter willing, the Brahmana gave his word of consent to the messengers, who started back immediately with their number added by one more as the representative of the bride's family. This representative carried with him a note given by Bharati, herself very competent in astrology, fixing the wedding for an auspicious date some fourteen days after. On their return, the messengers announced, even before they spoke, the success of their mission by the expression of brightness and joy in their faces. When the emissary of Vishnu Mitra, the bride's father, then showed the slip entrusted to him, the corners of Hima Mitra's lips extended from ear to ear in a smile that lit up his face. He

honoured the three messengers with rich presents. Soon, after announcing to his friends and relatives the news of his forthcoming marriage, Viswarupa, well-dressed and well-equipped with all the auspicious requisites for the marriage ceremony, started on a good day for the region of Sona. He was accorded a very hearty and grand welcome by Vishnu Mitra, his would-be father-in-law, whose heart brimmed with joy and satisfaction on seeing his face. Addressing the bridegroom's father, he said: "Myself, my daughter, my house and all my properties are at your service!" To this Hima Mitra replied: "We are indeed fortunate, and our family purified, by this meeting occasioned by this marriage ceremony. For, where are you, the master of all learning, and where is my miserable self!" Exchanging such courtesies, these two elders stood there in great joy, while stray visitors without any special responsibility moved about in a hilarious mood, joking and laughing. The marriage ceremonialists were astounded to see the natural beauty and dignity of the bride and the bridegroom, to whom any external decoration seemed superfluous, although custom required them to be dressed up and decorated. Bharati, sitting joyously in the midst of her companions, was asked to fix an auspicious moment for marriage. Astrologers, though learned, were consulted only afterwards to confirm her calculation. At that auspicious moment, in the midst of the tumultuous sounds of conchs, Mridangas, kettle-drums and Vedic chants, Viswarupa held the hands of Bharati in wedlock. The fathers of the two, shining in the assembly in their best, were liberal like the Kalpaka Vriksha (the fabled wish-yielding tree) in distributing customary gifts to all parties concerned. The sacrificial fire was now lit and Viswarupa made oblations in it according to the traditions of his family. He was followed by his bride, and they both together circumambulated the holy fire whose fragrant smoke filled the place. After the priests and relatives had departed with the rich presents bestowed on them, Viswarupa stayed in that house for four days in the fire chamber, tending the sacred fire along with his wife, observing the vows and disciplines inculcated by the ritualistic code.

Parents' Instructions to the Couple

(61-68) When it was time for the newly married couple to

depart, the parents of the girl said to their new son-in-law: "Listen to us for a while. This girl is very inexperienced and innocent. She was accustomed all day long to play ball and run about with companions until hunger compelled her to come home weeping. She has not been trained in any household work. Look after her as you would a child. Please talk only kind words to her. Any harsh word will irritate her and make her intractable. Some people are amenable to kind words; and some are otherwise. It depends on their nature. Once a learned Brahmana said about her looking at her features: 'Though she looks human in form, she is divine in nature. So she should never be treated harshly. She has all the signs of an omniscient one (Sarvajna). At one time in her life, she will have to be an umpire in a great debate of scholars.' So please tell your mother, as we are not able to meet her, the following: 'The responsibility of guiding this girl on right lines rests on her hereafter. She requires very patient and careful handling. In her girlishness she may commit many mistakes. A housewife should not make much of them. All of us grew to our present stature only slowly by imperceptible stages.' We are not able to tell all this directly to your mother, who might perhaps have no time to talk to others in the midst of her heavy household duties. It is equal to speaking to her directly when we convey this message to her through you, who are so dear to her."

(69-76) Then turning to their daughter they said: "Dear one, you have now entered into a new stage of life. Be careful to come out successful in it. If you still retain your childish ways, people will laugh at you. The way that others look at you will be entirely different from ours. Before marriage, father and mother are like gods to girls; after marriage the husband becomes so. Be one with him and his aspirations in all respects. By this discipline a woman conquers all the worlds, a feat so difficult to achieve otherwise. Do not take your meal before your husband has finished his. When he has gone away from home to a distant place, do not put on your jewelleries. There is an order of precedence in all matters, which you have to learn from the elders. If the husband speaks angrily, do not retort to him in the same tone, but show by your expression that you are very much concerned. If you behave with patience, things will all cool down. Do not talk to strangers

facing them, even in the husband's presence. It will lead him to suspect that you do so in private also, and that will mark the end of all domestic happiness. When your husband returns home after work, offer him water to wash himself with, and do everything to meet his wants. For a faithful wife, there is nothing so joyous as ministering to all the needs of her husband. Even when your husband is away from home, visitors may come to meet him. You should receive them courteously. For, some of them may be great men, whose displeasure may lead even to the ruin of a family. Learn to look upon your parents-in-law as your parents. Be on good terms with the brothers and sisters of your husband. If you are good to them, they too will be good to you. If they are annoyed, they can destory all harmony at home."

(77-79) Well instructed in this way, the newly-wed couple took their leave and reached their home in the capital city. In course of time Bharati gained great reputation for her learning. Because she commanded the respect of all, both in her parents' home and in her husband's, she now came to be called by the name of Ubhaya-Bharati 'one who was like Bharati or Saraswati in both places'. It must be remembered that she was the real Saraswati herself who had to take a human birth because of the curse of sage Durvasas. She was destined to live on earth till the time of her release from the curse came, and that was when she would be called upon to be the umpire in the great debate in which Sankaracharya was to establish his claim to be a Sarvajna (master of all learning).

(80-83) Now Sankara, by the exercise of his own power (Maya) had been born as an infant and was passing through all the stages of infancy even like Krishna in Gokula. Just as Mahavishnu lying as a tiny infant on a banyan leaf witnessed all the present, past and future of the worlds, so did the child Sankara, even in the midst of all his childhood's waywardness. With unwinking eyes men looked in wonder at this new manifestation of Divinity, the infant Sankara, lying playfully in the cradle, even as they once gazed at the bluish form of infant Krishna in Gokula. He shone, with his luxuriant growth of black hair resembling the colour of fresh clouds, in a form that looked like a combination of Vishnu, Siva and Brahma. Thus, it was at a time when the Vedic tradition was almost uprooted and destroyed by a host of heterodox sects

like the Buddhists, Pasupatas, Jainas, Kapalikas and Vaishnavas, that Sankara was born to protect the Vedic Dharma, and thus open the path of blessedness to men involved in the cycle of births and deaths.

CANTO 4

BOYHOOD DAYS UP TO THE AGE OF EIGHT

Sankara as a Precocious Boy

(1-20) Within his first year this child, who was God Siva embodied as the son of these Brahmana parents, showed himself proficient in languages. By the second year, he could recite all books and showed an untaught mastery of Kavyas and Puranas. Hearing once, he could learn anything, and so, he not only gave the least trouble to the teacher on his own account, but relieved him from much of his burdens by offering to teach his fellow students. Being free from Rajas and Tamas even from his days as a playful child, he soon became the master of all learning. Now after his tonsure ceremony, he shone like a sacrificial fire into which ghee offerings have been poured. Wonder of wonders! Without any instruction this boy was to master all the four Vedas with their auxiliary branches of learning, besides literature and the tough subjects of logic and sound reasoning. Excelling even the Guru of the Devas in his power of speech, he was to out-distance and silence all the proud scholars of the place. By the flow of words from his mouth, astonishing even Adisesha, he was destined to silence all debaters who faced him. Before his powerful criticism that would pulverize the teachings of spurious sects, the upholders of such doctrines were to find themselves helpless. Sivaguru, his fortunate father, felt his family blessed and its reputation enhanced by this son who equalled the sun itself in the brilliance of his body and mind. But Sivaguru was not destined to see the full development of the genius of his son. For, he passed away suddenly when the boy was only three years old and thoughts about his Upanayana were just cropping up in his mind. Alas! death makes no distinction between the good and the bad. The birth of a son in a family is sometimes a rarity, and of a talented son much more so. Having got such a talented son, and that after much prayer and austerities, Sivaguru was not fortunate enough to see the glorious efflorescence of his genius.

After the cremation and funeral ceremonies were over with the help of relatives, they all comforted the widowed lady with soothing

words. One year was spent in the observance of vows and ceremonies connected with funeral obsequies, after which that noble lady began to think of the Upanayana of her son. In his fifth year she conducted the Upanayana of the boy and thereby derived that satisfaction which only the proper discharge of a duty can bring. Very quickly he learnt the four Vedas and the six Sastras from the Guru, who was astounded by the prodigious intelligence and capacity of the small boy. His fellow students could not keep pace with him, and the Guru himself felt embarassed by the demands on his limited capacity to teach. His progress in study was so rapid that within two or three months he equalled the Guru himself in knowledge. In the knowledge of Vedas he was like Brahma; of its auxiliaries, like Gargya; of sacred narratives, like Brihaspati; of the doctrines on rituals, like Jaimini; and of philosophy, like Badarayana. The extensiveness of his learning was so great that he looked the very embodiment of Vyasa. Assiduously he learnt logic, Yoga philosophy, Samkhya philosophy of Kapila, and Mimamsa doctrines as expounded by Bhatta; but his interest and joy in these subjects got completely submerged in his tremendous enthusiasm for the non-dualistic doctrine of the Upanishads, like a well in the waters of a flood.

(21-33) While residing in the Guru's house, the boy Sankara went with a fellow student to the house of a poor Brahmana for alms (Bhiksha). Thereupon the lady of the house said with utmost humility to the Brahmacharins: "Fortunate, indeed, is the person who gets an opportunity to offer hospitality to Brahmacharins like you. But we are accursed beings whom poverty has deprived of the resources for the same. Vain is our birth as human beings!" Thus bemoaning her own fate piteously, the lady presented a mere gooseberry to them with a heart writhing in pain born of the thought of her utter poverty. Boy Sankara, touched to the core of his heart by the poverty of the family, instantaneously composed a great hymn of exquisite beauty (Kanakadhārā-stotra) on Lakshmi, the Goddess of wealth and good fortune, praying for the relief of the family. Soon did the Goddess manifest herself before him, illuminating all the quarters like a flash of lightning by the brilliance of her form. The boy prostrated himself before her and stood in all humility before the Goddess who, being highly propitiated by the beautiful hymn, said: "I have understood what you want of

me. But how can this couple become the object of my attention when they are devoid of any store of past meritorious acts that would make them eligible for the same?" To this the boy said: "O Mother! They have made a gift of a gooseberry fruit to me. If Thou art pleased with me, Thou shouldst bestow on them the reward for this gift of theirs." Highly pleased with the boy's reply, the Goddess immediately filled the house of the Brahmana with pellets of gold resembling gooseberry, to the utter astonishment of all onlookers. Afterwards they all began to praise the boy saying, "Sankara, like a Kalpa-taru, has brought prosperity to this place. He has endeared himself to the Brahmanas and the Devas by bringing wealth with which Vedic sacrifices could be performed." Thus, winning the goodwill and blessings of the Brahmanas and the Devas, Sankara continued his study under his teacher.

A Panegyric of Sankara[1]

(34-109) 34. All branches of learning, when interpreted by Sankara, revealed a new significance, just as a beautiful girl shines with added lustre when united with a worthy husband. 35. No external light was a match for the ethereal glory that Sankara cast everywhere on account of his mastery of all learning. 36. The lotus feet of this great Master, served by the hands of holy men, put to shame the natural lotus fondled by the rays of the moon. 37. The feet of handsome persons are compared to the lotus. But no lotus known in this world can match Sankara's feet. If out of water a moon-stone were to come up, if on that hard stone, a lotus were to bloom, if in that lotus a lake were to be formed, and if in that lake a lotus were to come up—to such a lotus (impossible and unknown) alone can Sankara's feet be compared. So unparalleled and incomparable were his feet. 38. Thinking that it is adequate praise, some compare his feet to a lotus (Padma) and his face to moon (Dwijaraja). But these are an under-estimate of his greatness and not a praise. For 'Padma' or 'lotus' is a species of flower which even his disciple Padmapada trampled upon while

1. The verses that follow are not connected directly with the main subject matter. They form a praise of Sankara. his form and his great achievements, in verses that are couched in highly ornate and metaphorical style. In Sanskrit they constitute poetry of a very high order, the effect of which it is impossible to bring out adequately in an English prose translation.

he walked over a lake. And pray, how can Dwijaraja (moon) come anywhere near his face which received the adoration of innumerable Dwijarajas (learned Brahmana scholars)? 39. His feet are placed in their lotus hearts by spiritual aspirants for their own purification. And his face sheds a nectarine lustre that even gods seek in preference to the nectar they are accustomed to seek from the moon. So surely his feet are infinitely superior to the lotus and his face, to the moon. 40. In every way the holy influence of Sankara is a blessing for mankind—it brings the fruit of spiritual realisation close to them to pluck; it disperses the thick cloud of ignorance of devotees; it consumes all their sorrows: it shatters the embankments of their accumulated sins; it kidnaps their evil passions of arrogance, jealousy and the like; and it gives the fatal blow at the vulnerable spot in the body of man's threefold miseries. 41. Look at the uniqueness of the feet of this embodiment of Parabrahman! In days of yore, with a kick of that left foot, he warded off the god of Death and offered protection to Markandeya; in his incarnation as Sankara, whenever people bowed at his feet on his arrival at any place, he removed all their sorrows. And even today, as Nataraja (dancing Siva), the deity in the temple of Vyaghrapura, his feet trample upon the evil demon of epilepsy that plagues mankind. 42. The tread of his feet, indicating his gradual advancement in childhood, made him resemble the waxing moon in many ways: as the moon's disc becomes fuller and fuller with the passing of days, his body attained greater and greater development and lustre; as the moon-rise makes the sea swell up, his progress in life led to a high-tide of Brahmavidya: as the growth of the moon surrounded by stars (Tara)' removes the darkness of night, he dispelled the darkness of ignorance from the hearts of men by the power of Tara (Pranava or Omkara); and like the moon refreshing people by driving away the heat of the day, he brought solace and joy to mankind by his presence in their midst. 43. Vedic scholars say that by prostrating at his feet men would attain to the Lord or gain salvation. But I go further and say: men attain to Moksha even by offering their heart's devotion at the feet of those who have served him. 44. His thighs covered with a white cloth, resembled the trunk of an elephant whitened by the foam from the waves of the milk ocean. 45. With a three-stringed waist band round his waist, he looked like a crystal hill with three

lines of golden creepers round its base. 46. Observing his figure, with his left hand holding a book and the right hand posed in Jnanamudra (in which the fore-finger is pressed to the thumb), one would think he is picking out the thorns of vicious arguments that have been inflicted on the sacred Vedic knowledge contained in the book in his left hand. 47. It looks as if the lotus flowers close their petals towards the evening out of reasons of security. They are dismayed that the arms of Sankara, tender and lovely like flowers of Kalpa-taru, have stolen much of their own tenderness and loveliness even during day-time when they stood full-blown. If such stealing could be effected in broad day-light, how much worse it will be at night! Anticipating this, as it were, the lotus flowers close the portals of entry into them by reducing themselves into buds at night. 48. His chest, broad and plump, looked like a bed spread for Jaya-Sri (goddess of victory) to take long rest after her tiresome peregrinations all over the world. 49. His two arms shone like the weapons known as Parikha for destroying internal and external enemies — internal enemies consisting of baser passions and external enemies in the form of controversialists — or better still, as two towers of victory. 50. His sacred thread, rivalling the rays of autumnal moon in its subdued brilliance, shone across his chest, and appeared in its softness, as if made of the delicate thread drawn from the stalks of lotus flowers. 51. His neck was in appearance like a big white conch, whose sonorous sound was the proclamation of victory over controversialists. 52. His teeth and lips looked, in close association with each other, like moonlight reflecting on a tender red coral creeper. 53. His glowing cheeks were the mirrors that the creator had provided for Saraswati, the Goddess of learning, who had her seat in his face. 54. Out of the ocean of men's good deeds rose the moon of Sankara, pouring its nectar-like light on mankind. But while the nectar and the light of the moon only tend to dim the spiritual glory of even the wise by promoting lust, the radiance from the Lord's face went to enhance man's spiritual urge. 55. Lo! beyond all description is the beauty of his eyes, the playground of the graces of the lotus-born Goddess Lakshmi - for, a mere look with which she was pleased to shower a rain of gold on a poor woman! 56. That sage resembled Rama in most respects: just as Rama destroyed the Asura *Dushana* (a Rakshasa of that name), Sankara demolished the criticisms

(*dushana*) of opponents. Even as Rama constructed *setu* (the linking path) to Lanka across the ocean, Sankara established a *setu* (a link of peaceful reconciliation) among sects and doctrines. As Rama destroyed *Atikaya* (a Rakshasa of that name), Sankara destroyed the great infatuation that one is the body (*atikaya-vibhrama*). Rama was a terror to Lanka (city of that name), so also was Sankara a terror to seductive women (*lanka*). Rama was the resort of all restless monkeys (*samsāri-śākhamrigāḥ*), while Sankara was the resort of all men in *samsara* (cycle of transmigratory existence). And both were like moon – Rama by bringing joy to the hearts of the sages under the nightmare of Rakshasas, and Sankara by being the most luminous among sages whose glances were like the succession of waves of the milk ocean. 57. His gracious smile always shed the refreshing ambrosia that could relieve the weariness and sufferings of men travelling through the wilderness of Samsara abounding in the thorns of evil men, in the forest-fire of sexuality, in the fierce wild elephants of diseases, in the treacherous jungle-tracks of life's bewildering ways, and in the mighty swamps of misfortunes and disappointments. 58. His forehead bears three shining lines of marking with holy ashes. Some compare them to the three courses of the sacred Ganges, but my view is that they represent the glorious achievement of producing wonderful commentaries on the triad of the Upanishads, the Brahma-sutras and the Bhagavad Gita. 59. By contemplating on his form of incomparable sublimity, people reject like straw the attractiveness of Kama, the god of love. This justifies our identification of Sankara with the destroyer of Kama, the great God Siva, who is noted for this achievement of His. 60. Acharya Sankara is verily that Dakshinamurti who is represented as sitting in absolute silence under a banyan tree and interpreting Non-dualism through that silence. Abandoning that silent teaching, he has now appeared on earth as the active preacher and commentator Acharya Sankara, whose eloquent interpretation of the Vedanta during his extensive tours over the country and whose numerous writings come as a saving rain for people who are being baked in the forest-fire of ignorance in the jungles of Samsara. 61. Many teachers and preachers were going about the country, vociferous in their arguments and fierce in their passionate sectarianism. Ordinary people were thrown into utter confusion by

the display of spurious learning by these false prophets. The Lord was born as Sankara to give relief to men from this doctrinal lawlessness. So, when the Acharya was born, the heterodox Buddhist philosophers began to tremble, while the dissident teachers like the Samkhyas lost their eloquence. 62. God Siva and Acharya Sankara resemble each other in many respects: both are conquerors of Kama, the god of erotic love. Both are all-knowing. And both are recognised as the best and the highest in their group—Siva among gods and Sankara among saintly scholars. But there is one interesting difference between them—while Siva is noted for his destruction of Yajna (the sacrifice of Daksha), Sankara promoted Yajna by propagating the Vedas and their teachings. 63. I am sure that in all the three worlds there is not a single one who comes anywhere near him. "He alone is his equal"; there is none to say 'no' to this statement. 64. The excellences of Sankara were countless, one virtue yielding many more—like the 'wish-yielding trees' of the heavenly garden, whose branches are full of blossoms and each blossom is covered with hovering honey bees. 65. He overcame all the defects of the human mind by the practice of their opposite qualities—lust by reflecting on its evils; anger and violence by cultivation of patience; greed and duplicity by learning contentment; pride by recognition of other's merits; and the demoness of unquenchable desires by learning to be satisfied with what one possesses. 66. Impossible it is to describe the transcending greatness of the great soul who uprooted lust, the great enemy of spiritual progress, even from the hearts of his disciples; who shattered to pieces the great obstacle of anger; and who dug out as easily as grass all defects like greed and other evil traits of the human heart. 67. Surprised at the wonders attendant on the advent of Sankara, the following strange conversation is said to have taken place between a Dig-gaja (Elephant supporting the quarters) and his wife; "How is it," asked the elephant's wife, "that even at noon we are experiencing this cooling light of the moon?" The Elephant replied, "O dear one! You are wrong; it is not the moon that is cooling us but the aura of virtues that surrounds Siva's new incarnation as Sankara." "But then," continued the female Elephant, "if it is really mid-day, and the cool moonlight is not there, pray, how are these blue lotuses in bloom?" The Elephant

replied, "What you see are not blue lotuses. They are the wide-staring eyes of the four Dames, the quarters, who are struck with wonder at the uniqueness of the Sankara incarnation." 68. Surprisingly, bees ceased to look even at grape juice, milk, sugar candy juice and other intensely sweet liquids, of which they are very fond. For lo! they now found all places brimming with the far sweeter essence of Sankara's greatness! 69. Incomparable in greatness was our sage. For by his patience, he deprived even the earth of her reputation for that quality; by his learning, he brought humiliation on Skanda and others in that field; and in renunciation, he towered even over Vyasa's son Suka, the prince among renouncers. 70. By his exemplary forbearance, he ranks with the earth; by his reputed learning, he is equal to Saraswati; and by his liberality to suppliants, he resembles the heavenly tree Kalpa-taru. Wise men hesitate to compare his greatness with any lesser objects. 71. Like him, none exists now; like him, none existed before; and like him, none will exist hereafter. What wonder is there if he thus stands peerless for all time like Mt. Sumeru! 72. By his birth, his family shines; by the nobility of his character, he shines; by his vast learning, his nobility shines; and by his exemplary humility, his learning shines. 73. The sage was verily a Kalpa-taru, with its floral wealth of reputation, with its honey bees of knowledge seekers, with its tender foliage of abounding virtues, with its sap of patience, and with its fruits of spiritual realisations. 74. The works of even the greatest of sages like Kapila, Kanabhuk and Patanjali are nowhere before the words and writings of the Lord. What then of the work of other sages! 75. The head of the Upanishads, drooping under the blows of criticism by Bhatta Bhaskara, once more got uplifted by Sankara, whose restatements of their teachings are as unique for their sweetness as for their power. 76. Where is the cause for fear of famine from the hot summer of the evil teachings of Buddhist Bhikshus, when there is flowing nearby the mighty river of words from the Himalayan heights of Sankara, even like the Ganges that gushed forth from a Himalayan cave, where it was held up as it flowed from the matted locks of Siva, for the benefit of the ancestors of Bhagiratha! 77. The learned eloquence of the Lord is a shackle for restraining the wayward movements of the mad elephant of sceptical thought; it is a palace for the king of knowledge; it is an ornament that learned men

wear; it is the support for the teachings of the Vedas; it is a boat carrying one across the ocean of Samsara; and it is a storm that blows away the noxious smells of heretical teachings from the atmosphere of thought. 78. The words of wisdom of the sage—the vibrations of Advaitic thought that it released like the toll of a mighty bell—were, on the one hand, a Mantra that paralysed the mind and speech of sophistical heretics, and on the other, a breeze that broadcast the sweet fragrance of the lotus lake of Vedic teachings. 79. Who on earth would not be charmed by that Brahman-knower's teachings which are more fragrant than substances like camphor and musk, which are sweeter than sugar candy and milk, which surpass moonlight in the cooling influence it has on the heat of the three-fold miseries of men—physical, psychic and spiritual! 80. Advaita, the royal road to salvation, which is free from thorns and other obstructions of perverse thoughts, and is ever thronged by wise men who avoid the crooked ways of the sophists, has now been decorated with honey-laden flower-wreaths of the great Acharya's charming teachings. 81. Like a cooling breeze, free from the dust of atheistic thoughts and laden with the fragrance of spiritual insight, his words of beauty and wisdom have been a refreshing and rejuvenating influence on all weary travellers in the jungles of Samsara, scorched by the heat of its forest fires of worldly worries and tribulations. 82. On listening to his teachings so full of sweet persuasiveness and profound wisdom, one is led to wonder whether Goddess Saraswati is verily performing a dance on the tip of his tongue, spreading far and wide the melodious sound produced by the combination of the jingling of her anklets and of the mini-bells in her waist band, along with the clang of the bracelets on her arms. 83. The literary style of the Acharya, while it excels in its power the rolling sound of the thunder clouds which rise above the ravings of the sullen wind-tossed sea at the out-break of the monsoon, resembles in its charming agreeableness the sweet fragrance coming from a garden of jasmine flowers. 84. His prose and poetical works, flawless and pleasing to read, are a veritable encyclopaedia of learning. While delectable like nectar, they are entrenched in such sound reasoning that they are impregnable to the attacks of opponents with their malicious questionings and criticisms. Full of positive and ennobling ideas, they are capable of removing the miseries of life and guiding

man to the goal of salvation. 85. His teachings are capable of destroying the false identification of the Self with the body— that basic ignorance which forms the first sprout of miseries on the tree of life, which is the spring that floods life with the water of mental worries, which is the dancing platform for obstacles and difficulties, which is the prefatory introduction to life's book of evils, which is the fertile field of malicious thoughts, and which is the spring for the continuous flow of false perceptions. 86. The pearl-like words of the Acharya representing the ancient wisdom of the Vedas will remove the dreaded fears of Samsara from aspirants who have been misled into the path of the Tathagata (Buddha), wherein is laid the dangerous trap of nihilism by the sect of the Kshapanakas. 87. The Acharya's profound teachings, powerful like the currents of Ganga augmented by strong winds, flow majestically, carrying away the accumulated dirt of false doctrines and giving relief to the mind of man stricken with the drought of perverse notions on Dharma. 88. The aroma of his words, charged with the stimulants of wisdom and love, delights, inebriates and renders ecstatic the bee of wise men's mind, like the spreading fragrance of fresh jasmine and the honeyed sweetness of Mandāra flowers. 89. Except fools and idiots, who will delight to wallow in the muddy waters of Dwaita, having once experienced the blissful shower of the Acharya's words having Advaita as their import? Will one accustomed to put on fine silken dress, ever care to bear the disgusting burden of torn and foul-smelling rags? 90. One who has attained to an extreme refinement of understanding by exposure to the moonlight of the Acharya's teachings will no more feel any interest in the good things of life. Milk and honey will be for him like salt, sugar like chillies, and sugar-cane, grapes and plantains like worthless stuff! 91. How could his words be so uncommonly sweet unless the sweetness residing in all sweet things in the world has gone to enrich it in some way or other— the sweetness of honey by sale, of grape by presentation, of milk as a religious gift, of sugar cane juice by extraction, and ambrosia by fear of theft? 92. So also wherefrom did his words, so unique in their nobility and so transcendent in wisdom, derive their perpetual fragrance unless they have gathered it from all the sources of sweet smell—from camphor by loan, from musk deer by training, from jasmine by long association,

from saffron by purchase, and from sandalwood by theft? 93. For long have I been accustomed to consume curd, milk, sugar-candy water and the juices of various fruits. But none of them come anywhere near the delectableness of Sankara's words, before which even the heavenly nectar will lose its fame as the most delicious of all drinks. 94. A veritable shower of camphol solution to men scorched by the fierce heat of the fire of Samsara, a long pearl necklace of great natural beauty adorning the goddess of Mukti, a swan shining in the wonderfully calm and joy-giving lake of Advaita—may Sankara's nectarine words of such description bring purity and enlightenment to the minds of all! 95. Victory unto the creeper of Sankara's noble teachings—the creeper which has grown in the bed of Vedanta (Upanishads), which is winding round the supporting palm of learned men, which is watered by the expositions of great disciples like Suresa, which is covered by the foliage of spiritual detachment and the floral wealth of enlightenment, and which yields an abundant harvest of the luscious fruits of immortality for the consumption of all spiritual seekers. 96. The teachings of Sankara constitute a mighty river whose sanctifying waters are the Upanishads, and whose torrential flow, sweeping away the pride of all dualistic thinkers, is irresistible like the heavenly river Ganga rushing from the matted locks of Siva with its waters overflowing its bank. 97. No praise is too much for his teachings, whose mighty waves, resembling those of the roaring milk ocean at the time of its churning by the Devas and Asuras, bathe the bodies of men scorched by the heat of the flames of Samsara, with their rejuvenating spray of ambrosial words. 98. The 'white' radiance of the Lord's fame has come out victorious in its contest for supremacy with similar glories possessed by the silvery mountain, the milk ocean and the autumnal moon. 99. Lo! It looks that the moon, defeated in its contest with him for purity, is daily taking a plunge in the sea for washing off its dirt, and that finding the mark unerased still from its face, has gone into hiding in the matted locks of Siva! 100. It looks that it is due to the 'whiteness' of Sankara's fame spreading everywhere in the sky that we see the Dames of the Four Quarters beautifying themselves with all white ingredients—their braids with Mallika flower, their foreheads with white sandal paste Tilaka, and their chest with the white pearl necklace of stars. 101. The beauty of the moon of

Sankara's glory is far more fascinating and far reaching than that of the natural moon. Lo! See how the quarters seek to retain it in their lap always, how the stars try to reach it with their rays, how the sky kisses it ever in passionate love, how the heavenly Ganga embraces it always through reflection, how the inaccessible caves of Mount Lokaloka gleam with its rays, and how even the heart of Adisesha leaps with joy at its rise. 102. The radiant waves of the milk ocean of his fame laugh, as it were, with contempt at the silvery light of the moon, humble the pride of the invigourating delectableness for which ambrosia is famous, and shatters the dense darkness of ignorance that overcasts the worlds. 103. The succession of the glorious achievements of this great Sannyasin excels in brilliance the rare gems that come out one after another from an elephant's forehead when struck by the paws of a lion, and also compels overtures of friendship from the high and luminous waves that ceaselessly rise on the milk ocean stirred by the churning rod of Mandara mountain. 104. "O Cave of Lokaloka!", said the blue lotus lake, "why are you sitting with an unusual sweetness on your face? Is it because you are absorbed in the joy of the company of your husband, the spreading moonlight of Sankara's glory?" To which the Mountain Cave replied, with a counter-question, "Is there any cause different from that for the bloom on your face, O blue lotus-lake?" Thus did they exchange pleasantries at the expense of each other. 105. Like a storm scattering the light-weight cotton of controversialists loaded with their pride of learning, like the milk ocean of spiritual consciousness swelling at the moon-rise of wisdom everywhere, like the spreading rain clouds giving relief to people suffering in the forest-fire of Samsara, shines Sankara in all the glory of his unrivalled greatness. 106. It was only after a thorough test, by enlightened scholars, of his proficiency in the Sastras, Smritis, Puranas, Itihasas like the Mahabharata and all other branches of knowledge, that he established his claim to be a 'Master of all Learning'. 107. Even as he had acquired mastery of all learning, so had he attained to peace and purity through the reverential study and practice of the great teachings of Vyasa in the Brahma-sutras. 108. Though a denier of the reality of the world, unlike Brahma, its creator, Sankara still deserves to be called by Brahma's appellation *Chaturāsya*, one with four faces, because he, too, was in another

sense a *Chaturāsya*—one possessed of an impressive face. He also deserves to be called Purushottama, the noblest of beings, like Mahavishnu, though unlike Mahavishnu, who is always associated with a '*Bhoga*', His serpent associate Adisesha, Sankara was an *Abhogavān*, one without any concern with worldly enjoyments. Like Siva he was one who had conquered cupid, though unlike Him, who is known as Virupaksha or one with queer eyes, Sankara was endowed with attractive eyes. Thus, a peer to the Trimurties, he was a unique personage deserving the allegiance of all the worlds. 109. Wise men admiring Sankara saw in him the very presence of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. For, they found in him the presence of the consorts of all these three—Brahma's consort Saraswati in his face as great power of speech (Saraswati); Vishnu's consorts Kshama (Earth-Goddess) and Sri (Lakshmi), as patience (Kshama) and as glory of form (Sri) in him; and Siva's consort Arya (the Divine Mother) as the noble devotees (Aryas) worshipping at his feet. 110. The Truth of the Upanishads is self-existent and is not born of any human agency, just as Sita was not born of any human parentage. As Sita, devoted only to Rama, was abducted and in many ways persecuted by Ravana in the false garb of an ascetic, so did the Buddhist upholders of 'the doctrine of momentariness', putting on the false garb of monks, do violence to the great Upanishadic truths devoted exclusively to the Supreme Being. And just as Rama destroyed all the Rakshasas, the enemies of enlightened men, and rescued Sita—so did Sankara defeat the Buddhists, the traducers of the Vedas, and restore the Sita of Upanishadic truth to its pristine glory. Victory unto the great Sankara, the benefactor of the three worlds!

CANTO 5
EMBRACING SANNYASA

Reputation of Boy Sankara attracts the King

(1-9) Thus at the age of seven that wonderful child, having spanned the ocean of Vedic learning, left the house of the Guru and returned home to pay his respect to his mother. Thenceforth he spent his time quietly at home, engaging himself in the service of his mother, in studying the Veda and in offering oblations in the sacred fire twice a day along with observing all allied rituals. The very sight of that boy could rid young men of their impatience and aggressiveness. Even an aged man would feel inclined to get up in his presence and offer him a seat, and no man could help saluting him respectfully at the very sight. And the mother, too, felt overjoyed to see in her son a combination of rare virtues —power of speech, great intelligence, tendency to do good and great personal attractiveness. One day that lady, whose body had become weak by fasts and other ascetic observances, happened to fall down exhausted, as she went in the burning sun to take her bath in the river Purna, which was at some distance from her home. Anxious at his mother's condition, the young boy managed to get her back home with the help of several neighbours and restore her to consciousness by adopting appropriate remedial measures. Afterwards in order to make the river Purna easily accessible to his mother, he addressed an invocatory prayer to the deity presiding over it, requesting her to turn her course to the neighbourhood of their home. The river deity was pleased to grant the prayer, and the very next morning people were all surprised to see that the ocean-bound stream had changed its course and was flowing through the neighbourhood of that home like another Ganga, refreshing the whole village with the cool breeze wafted along its broad surface.

(10-19) The reputation of this wonderful child reached the ears of the king of Kerala and being anxious to see him, he sent a minister of his to fetch the boy to his capital. The minister duly arrived at the boy's home with rich presents and a retinue including a troupe of elephants. The minister thus addressed the

boy: "Because of my good fortune, the king of Kerala has been pleased to send me here. This king is noted alike for his learning and his valour in the field of battle. At his court he maintains with due honours a large number of great scholars who are experts in refuting the arguments of others by their wise and pleasing words. This king, the most illustrious one of his dynasty, and the victor of all other kings. is eager to adore your holy self and be sanctified by the dust of your feet. He has sent the best of his elephants to take you to his palace. Please be good enough to sanctify his palace by your visit." To that minister, who thus discharged his duty as a messenger, observing proper form and showing due respect, the boy gave a ready reply: "I am a Brahmacharin, wearing a dress of skin, living by alms, and engaged in the numerous observances that the Vedas have laid down for this station of life. A Brahmacharin should not leave his duties, lured by the luxury of riding on an elephant and the chances of being honoured at a king's court. It is, therefore, difficult for me to comply with this request, and I am sorry I have to send you back home, disappointed. It is the duty of the king to see that men of the four Varnas and the four Ashramas do their respective duties properly. Therefore, do not come with a request that goes counter to this duty of kings."

(20-30) Hearing these words, that straight-forward and simple-hearted emissary returned to the palace and appraised the king of the situation. Thereupon the king himself came to the house of the saintly boy and was astonished to see that unique Brahmacharin engaged in various Vedic rites, wearing a pure white sacred thread that looked, as it dangled down his chest, like Ganga flowing down a wooded Himalayan slope; dressed like another Bala Deva with a bluish cloth and a black buck's skin; and wearing a girdle of Munja grass of golden hue, with which he looked lustrous like the Kalpa-taru (heavenly tree) whose beauty is enhanced by a golden creeper encircling it. On seeing that divine boy with a radiant form and an engaging smile, the king fell down before him and prostrated several times, recognising him to be an embodiment of the Divinity. After exchange of courtesies, the king presented a huge quantity of gold to that boy, the Incarnation of Siva, and then read before him three dramas that he had newly written. The saintly boy was very much pleased with the literary

talents displayed by the king in these writings, and asked him to choose any boon he wanted. These words were to the king like veritable ambrosia, as they were in consonance with the object of his visit. He prayed to the young saint that he be blessed with a male issue equal in prowess to himself. The Brahmacharin thereupon blessed: "O King, your prayer will be fulfilled. Go home, free from all worry. As for all this gold you have presented, I want none of it. You may gift it to the people." The king was further advised to perform the Vedic sacrifice called Putreshti. He thereupon went home joyously, remembering again and again the great qualities of the saintly boy.

Permission for his becoming a Sannyasin

(31-35) Many great scholars went to that master of all learning to get instructed in advanced texts of grammar and the like. Not only did he make them proficient in these texts, but imparted to them the capacity to think and reflect on what they had learnt, and thus increase the profundity of their knowledge. Thus, for many days he continued to stay at his house, observing all the customary duties with attention and humility, and giving great joy and satisfaction to his widowed mother. 'I am the support of my mother; mother is my support. Any separation between us will be very painful'—thinking thus, this incarnation of Siva did not like to enter into the married state. But many relatives, finding that the young Brahmacharin had completed his education, thought it fit to get him married and went about searching for a suitable bride.

(36-49) Meanwhile, the four great sages, Upamanyu, Dadhichi, Gautama and Agastya, came to the house of this divine boy to meet him. He gave them a respectful reception along with his mother, prostrating himself before them in the proper way and offering them Madhuparka and excellent seats to sit on. Then, as the boy stood before them with his folded palms held over the head in respectful salutation, the sages talked to him on various matters. After a time, the mother intervened in the conversation and said: "I feel very much honoured by this visit of your venerable selves. That we could see you even in this evil age of Kali, is not an insignificant blessing. This boy has attained

to the highest proficiency in Vedic study even at a very young age. He is also possessed of other great qualities to an unusual extent. I would like to know the secret of all these extraordinary features about him." At this, Agastya, as desired by the other Rishis, began to reply to her as follows: "Good lady, in former days your husband had performed austerities to propitiate Siva and obtain a son as a boon from him. On being asked by the great God to select between a long-lived but worthless son, and an issue short-lived but possessed of transcendent greatness, he selected the second alternative. Accordingly, out of your great good fortune, as it were, Siva Himself has taken birth through you as this boy, and there is no one equal to him in learning and wisdom in all the worlds." Thereupon the lady expressed her desire to know how long her son would live, and the sages told her. "Though your son is destined to live only for sixteen years, the span of his life will be extended by another sixteen years more owing to various extraneous circumstances." As the great Rishi thus began his predictions about the future, all the Rishis, as it were to stop him from further disclosing the future, got up to depart with the boy's permission.

(50-54) The words of the Rishi were such a shock to the mother that she almost collapsed under its impact as a lotus flower by summer heat, or a plantain tree by a strong wind. To her so afflicted, the boy Sankara addressed the following words of consolation: "Why are you so sorry in anticipation of the future? The conditions of life in this Samsara are well-known to you. As that of a silken flag tossed and torn by strong winds, is the condition of the extremely fickle life of man. Even a fool knows this and cannot think of the body as permanent. Life in the transmigratory cycle is verily like stay in a caravanserai. How many children have we looked after, how many wives and husbands have we married, in the course of our repeated births and deaths? Those who live the life of the world will not have an iota of happiness. So what I desire is to take to the fourth state of life, that of the Sannyasin, in order to liberate myself from this repeating cycle of Samsara."

(55-58) Hearing these words of very ominous import, the mother's already grief-stricken heart was overwhelmed with fear of losing her son, and she said with tears in her eyes: "My boy,

do not think or speak in this way. It is better that you marry, become a father, perform various sacrifices, and then become an ascetic at an advanced age. This is the orthodox way. How can I live alone, after losing my only child also to asceticism? If I die out of sorrow from all such bitter experiences, who will be there to perform even my obsequies? O all-knowing boy, how can you go away leaving me, your old mother? How is it that your heart is not moved to pity for me in my helpless condition?"

The Crocodile Incident and Departure from Home

(59-74) He, thereupon, comforted his weeping mother with many kind words and spent some more time with her. He thought within himself thus: "I have not the least liking for this worldly life. But mother will not permit me to leave it. She is a Guru unto me and, therefore, I must have her goodwill and blessing." While continuing to stay at home with such thought in mind, he happened to go one day to the river for his bath. As soon as he stepped into the water, a crocodile caught him by the leg and he began to call out to his mother in distress. The mother rushed to the spot and began to weep and wail on seeing the lotus face of her son shining above the water while the rest of his body was submerged by the crocodile's pull. "Alas! Why am I still alive!" she exclaimed in distress, "my husband is already dead, and now my son, my only support in life, is about to meet with his end in the mouth of a crocodile." The boy now cried out to the distressed mother: "O mother! give permission to me to become a Sannyasin. I am sure the crocodile will then release me." Hearing these words, the mother gave her consent, thinking within herself: "If he lives, even be it as a Sannyasin, I have a chance of seeing him at least on some rare occasions. If he dies, even that would not be possible." And lo! Immediately the mother gave her consent, the crocodile released the boy, who came out without any serious hurt. He then said to the mother, "Mother! I am your son and servant. Tell me what I, this new Sannyasin, should do. I shall certainly follow your command. These relatives, to whom my paternal wealth accrues, will certainly keep you in comfort, supplying all necessities in life like food, clothing and shelter. If you fall ill, they will look after you, and in the event of death, they will surely do all your obsequies according

to rites. You can thus live on in comfort without any of the bother of managing an estate." The mother thereupon replied: "It is, indeed, a good fortune that your life could be saved through my giving you permission to become a Sannyasin. But I desire very much that on my death you should come and perform my obsequies yourself. If this is not done, of what good is it to have borne a son!" "True, Mother," replied Sankara, "whenever you desire my presence by your side, be it in sickness or death, be it during day or night, I shall certainly come to your side. And on your death, I shall come to cremate you. You should not weep and wail, thinking that this boy has gone away as a Sannyasin, abandoning you, a helpless widow. By your sending me away with your blessing, you will derive a hundredfold more benefit by way of great merit, than by keeping me by your side." Then, doing obeisance to his kith and kin, he entrusted the care of his weeping mother to them.

(75-79) By about this time, the river that he had formerly made to flow through his village for the convenience of his mother, began to erode the sides of the temple of Krishna there. During a rainy season flood water entered the temple, deposited mud within, and was about to carry away the image itself. So, when Sankara had decided to leave his village with his mother's permission, Lord Sri Krishna, the Deity installed in the temple, spoke to him one day through a disembodied voice thus: "You are now departing from this place. You have brought this river Purna to this place from a distance. Its waters are invading My abode and giving Me constant trouble. It has become impossible for Me to stay on here." So Sankara respectfully lifted up that image and established it in a secure place free from the disturbance of the river.

(80-88) Impelled by the spirit of renunciation, he then took leave of Sri Krishna, the Deity in the temple, as also of his mother, and started off on his journey in this wide world with the idea of taking to the life of Sannyasa, which is like a boat to one desirous of crossing the ocean of Samsara without falling into it. There were three factors that prompted him to leave his home and become a wandering ascetic. First, there was the revelation by sage Agastya, reminding him of his world mission; next there was the permission given to him by Sri Krishna and his own mother; and above

all, there was his intense spirit of renunciation which made all objects of enjoyment obnoxious to him. It is well known that Kama (cupid), the spirit of sex-love, would not dare to stand before the three-eyed God Siva who is famed to have burnt him to ashes by a look of his third eye. How then could low hankerings of worldly life have any charm for one who was of the very essence of that great God? "Both moon deity and Brahma were overcome by sexual urge. Even I (Siva) was overpowered by the same at the sight of Mohini"—is it thinking thus in his mind and desirous of stamping out all traces of sexuality from himself that the great God Siva took the form of this prince of ascetics who felt the prompting of renunciation at so early an age! Where is the learned man who could give an adequate description of the greatness of this boy ascetic who could so easily overcome the irresistible might of the ace-archer Mara (Kama or cupid), whose pride in his valour has been enhanced by the ease with which he could bring the Devas under his sway, deplete the vigour of the Asuras, infatuate the Gandharvas, and set ablaze the minds of human beings! How wonderful was the power of renunciation which generated in him all other spiritual endowments—Santi or peace, which consists in the tranquillity of the mind born of the knowledge of the futility of all worldly attainments; Danti or self-control, consisting in the capacity to resist the senses from running after sense objects; Uparati or withdrawal, which takes the shape of natural indrawnness of the mind due to lack of interest in all external objects and enjoyments; Kshanti or forbearance, which endows one with the capacity to stand all conditions of life unperturbed; Samadhi or concentration, which consists in spiritual absorption with complete awareness to the exclusion of all distractions like disturbing thought, lethargy, sleep, etc;, and Sraddha or faith, the most precious wealth of the spiritual aspirant, as it gives him unshakable acceptance of the scripture and the teacher! He started on a way of life which has solitude for one's pleasure garden, chance-obtained food for banquet, and the indwelling Siva for sole companion. He passed through various lands, and whatever he saw on the way—forests, rivers, cities, countryside, mountains, animals, men and the rest—he looked upon as a great magic show put up by the Cosmic Magician, the Sat-chid-ananda, for His sport. He assumed the staff of the San-

nyasin to drive the Cow of the Vedas on to the royal road of life, rescuing her from the foul dogs and jackals of hostile religionists whose torture of merciless criticism had forced her to seek shelter in obscurity. A calamity indeed would have happened had not the great world-teacher arrived in time, with staff in hand, to drive off these dogs of hostile critics with their tongues lolling out, as it were, in their eagerness to attack at the vital parts of the flying flock of God-fearing men.

Meeting with Govindapada and accepting Sannyasa

(89-96) Travelling a long distance, that young Sannyasin, with staff in hand and wearing new Kashaya dress, arrived at the forest hermitage of sage Govinda towards one evening, even like the sun at the western horizon. The shade of tall trees on the river bank and the cool breeze blowing through them assuaged his bodily exhaustion very soon, while the sight of deer skins and bark clothes on the branches of bushes indicated to him that he had arrived at a hermitage. Desirous of being initiated into Brahman-knowledge there, he sought the advice of the ascetic inhabitants of the place. As directed by them, he approached sage Govinda's residence, a cave with an entrance only a cubit in width. In the presence of the hermits, he went round the cave three times, and then falling prostrate at its door, began to chant a hymn in praise of sage Govinda full of the spirit of devotion to the Guru. He said, "I worship Thee, the incarnation of the great serpent Sesha, who is the bed of Mahavishnu, an ornament of Siva, and the one on whose head the earth with all its mountains and rivers rest. Thou art the same sage Patanjali, a manifestation of Adisesha, whose thousand faces put his disciples to fright and who thereupon assumed a gentle form with a single face. Thou alone, as Patanjali, produced the great work on Yoga, as also the exegesis on the grammatical treatise of Panini. O far-famed one! Thou didst attain to the highest spiritual realisation from the instruction of the great Gaudapada, a disciple of Suka the son of Vyasa. Praying to Thee for instruction in the truth of Brahman, I salute Thee, the repository of all great virtues!"

(97-105) Praised thus, the sage came out of super-conscious state and asked, "Who are you?" In reply Sankara said the following, indicative of his great spiritual enlightenment: "Revered Sir. I am neither the earth, nor water, nor fire, nor air, nor sky, nor any

of their properties. I am not the senses and the mind even. I am Siva, the divisionless essence of Consciousness." Hearing these words, pregnant with the spirit of non-dualistic consciousness, the sage was delighted beyond description and replied: "Dear boy, through the supersensuous insight which the experience of Samadhi has given me, I see that you are the great God Siva come on earth in human form." Then, in observance of the customary rules for establishing the relationship between the teacher and the disciple, the sage extended his feet through the mouth of the cave, which the would-be disciple worshipped with all devotion and ceremony. One may have an inborn knowledge of the Truth, but it is the scriptural dictum that one should be instructed duly by a teacher. So Sankara performed the worship of the teacher, and through the devoted service of him, became the object of his loving affection. Highly pleased with the disciple's service, the sage imparted to him the knowledge of Brahman through the four Maha-Vakyas (great Vedic sentences) Prajnānam Brahma (Brahman is pure Consciousness): *Aham Brahmāsmi (I am Brahman); Tat-twam-asi (Thou art That); Ayamātmā Brahma (This Atman is Brahman)*. He was then taught the Vedanta Sutras of Vyasa, and through them, the innermost essence of the Vedanta philosophy. Vyasa was the son of Parasara, and Suka, of Vyasa. Suka had as his disciple Gaudapada, and Gaudapada had as his disciple Govindapada, from whom Sankara now received initiation in the knowledge of Brahman. Govindapada was considered an incarnation of Adisesha, described in the Puranas as the serpent supporting the worlds, and it was from him that the world teacher Sankara learned all the Sastras as a disciple, with the undertaking that he would do his best to spread that knowledge among men.

In Praise of Sankara the Sannyasin

(106-116) Having assumed the fourth Ashrama (Sannyasa), the resort of Paramahamsas and the reward of inconceivable merits, the great teacher shone like Dhruva in the vast expanse of the sky. With a light ochre-coloured cloth round his waist, he looked sublime like a towering snow-covered Himalayan peak, whose base is tinged red by the evening sun. Even as Lord Siva puts on the blood-stained skin of the elephant-demon (Gajasura) whom he had killed, the young Sannyasin appeared to have put on the red-tinged

skin of the Elephant of Ignorance that he had destroyed, under the guise of the bright cloth having the ochre tinge of the rising sun. Sporting ever in the pleasure garden of Sruti (the Veda), providing support for all aspirants to Paramahamsahood, and ever established in Bliss-Consciousness that is non-different from himself, Sankara is the veritable Brahman Himself. In him the meaning of the root *Brih* (the vast), from which the word Brahman comes, becomes truly fulfilled. As one with the unitary non-dual consciousness, Sankara measures all the manifested worlds in one stride, as it were, by being the material and instrumental cause of everything included in the process of creation, preservation and dissolution, and thereby excels Mahavishnu who required two strides to cover the worlds in his incarnation as Vamana. Being ever established in the transcendent glory of the Self, he is above the three states of consciousness (waking, dream and sleep) as also uninvolved in any of the stages of life, unlike Mahavishnu who is subject to the states and to the stages of life in his various incarnations. He is also without attachment for anything, while Mahavishnu is involved in the life of Vaikuntha. The Srutis, therefore, declare that one who has renounced everything and has become one with the non-dual Self is superior even to Hari (Mahavishnu). Compared to Rudra also, the superiority of Sankara is obvious. Rudra is attached to *Bhutas* (his followers of monstrous shape) while Sankara has no attachment to *Bhutas* (the five elements and their products). Again Rudra has intimate association with *gava*, *bhūti*, and *bhoga* (bull, ashes and snakes) while Sankara is free from attachment to *gava* (senses), *bhūti* (wealth) and *bhoga* (enjoyments). Rudra is supposed to have destroyed the *tripuras* (the three cities), but it was with the help of an army of followers, whereas Sankara destroyed the *tripuras* (the three bodies gross, subtle and causal) by his mere look of unitive understanding. It is for this reason that he is recognised as superior as Parama-Siva or Pure Consciousness, comprehending and transcending the three states of waking, dream and sleep. How can the Vedas help praising one like Sankara established in this non-dual state, as superior even to Rudra? For, Rudra in his conquest of *Tripurās* (the three citadels) was equipped with a *sauvarna-dharma* (bow made of gold); he was *purusha-phaleshu* (having arrows of which the Purusha or Mahavishnu was the

handle); he was also *prithviratha* (one equipped with earth as chariot) having the sun and the moon as wheels. With all this equipment he could conquer only three citadels. But without any of these, Sankara was victorious over the fortification of eight citadels (the Jivahood constituted of: the five Pranas, the five organs of knowledge, the five organs of action, the mind with its four aspects, ignorance or Avidya, desire or Kama, works or Karma, and tendencies or Vasana). He had no *sauvarna-dharma* (the *dharmas* relating to the four *varnas*); he was no *purusha-phaleshu* (one attached to fruits of actions); he was not also a *pārthiva-ratha* (one with a sense of being identified with this body made of earth). When without any of these equipments he could overcome the fortification of eight citadels, how can one help describing him as Para-Siva (the Supreme Being above Rudra and above all manifested forms of the Deity)! This Samsara is verily a terrific rainy season, having sins as its darkening clouds and sorrows for its torrential showers. Having abandoned it, Sankara, the Supreme Swan, has flown to the far-off lake constituted of the minds of good men, and is thriving there feeding on tender lotus stems consisting of the fame of proud and powerful opponents. Sankara, the greatest of ascetics, is a real Paramahamsa, a Supreme Swan. Just as that noble bird is able to separate milk from water in spite of their indivisible mergence in each other, so has he been able to do the very difficult task of separating Brahman from the world of Samsara which seems to have covered Him and hidden His identity. Thus revealing the latent Spirit in the minds of men, he has helped to eliminate from them the polluted waters with which the life of Samsara has adulterated their spiritual identity. All knowledge in the relative world is false, it being an inextricable mixture of the true and the untrue like that of milk and water, caused by super-imposition arising from ignorance. Even the wisest of men are, therefore, puzzled in the quest for Truth. But the Great Swan Sankara has been able to extract the milk of Truth from the water of untruth and present the same for the benefit of mankind. Those who will not accept it are verily mean creatures like crows which stick to their habit of eating the bitter margosa fruits even when better things are available. It is, indeed, very appropriate that Sankara shares the name of Hamsa (*Parama-hamsa*) with the sun (*Hamsa*).

As the sun removes the darkness of night, Sankara eliminates the darkness of ignorance from the minds of men. He is again a *Mitra*, a friend, of all like *Mitra*, the sun, giving light to the whole world. As the sun gives joy to the *Nalikas* (lotuses) by its light, Sankara gives joy to the wise with *Nalikas* (pure Truth with all untruth eliminated). As the sun by its light removes the suffering of separation of *Chakras* (*chakravāka birds*), he removes the accumulated miseries of a wide circle of devotees (*Suhrit-chakra*). As the sun reveals all *Arthas* or objects of the world, Saṅkara reveals the Truth (*Artha*) of the Spirit for mankind.

Floods in the Narmada

(117-124) While Sankara, after taking to the Ashrama of the Paramahamsas, was engaging himself in the contemplation of the Atman, the rainy season announced its approach by streaks of lightning, whose momentary glow in the skies declared, as it were, the volatility of all worldly enjoyments. The clouds in a mood of complaint and retaliation seemed to overcast the sun, the husband of lotus flowers, declaring, as it were: "He not only subjects us to the merciless kicks of his flaming limbs of light rays, but also deprives, by his absorbing power, our lady-love, the earth, of the flowers of moistening rain that we are showering on her!" The streaks of lightning, characterised by momentary flashes and instant disppearance, looked like the outburst of philosophic wisdom of sensuous scholars, which ends as momentary glow of wordy illumination but has no permanent hold or expression in their lives. The rolling thunderous sounds of these clouds, coming afar from the sky (*Vishnu-pāda*) delighted the denizens of this parched earth, as if they were the revelations of Brahmic wisdom coming from the real *Vishnu-pāda* (or Vaikuntha, the abode of Vishnu). "How is it that these Sannyasins, out of their pride in the knowledge of Non-duality, have ceased to offer me, the leader of Devas, the tribute of Yajnas which all men owe me?"—with this resentment in mind, did god Indra ascend his chariot of clouds and display his weapon of rainbow. The powerful forest winds, conveying the red dust of Kutaja sprouts mixed with the dark pollen fallen from trees, swayed everything in the landscape, as if they symbolised the irresistible play of the Gunas of Prakriti in this mighty cosmic manifestation. The cloudy

Rakshasas of dark body, equipped with the weapon of the rainbow and fearsome with their gleaming eyes of flashy lightning and shouts of thunderous outbursts, got ready, as it were, to disturb the meditative sacrifice (Dhyana-Yajna) of the Sannyasins.

(125-127) Presently, the clouds covered the whole sky with a thick pall of darkness and began to hurl down torrential rain, while Sankara sat absorbed in spiritual communion, with all his external senses completely indrawn and oblivious of what was taking place outside. As a coy young bride, under the gentle persuasion of her friends, enters the bridal chamber, and then little by little abandons her natural self-consciousness and contacts her husband and finally forgetting herself completely, becomes one with him, so did the sage Sankara withdraw his mind into the inner recesses with the aid of the discriminative process inculcated by the Vedantic teaching and then shedding his ego-sense, seek to contact the Lord, and finally at the summit of communion, to lose his identity completely in Him. In that Supreme Self neither the sun, nor the moon, nor the stars, nor the lightning shines—what then to speak of earthly fire! It transcends heaven and earth. Being devoid of any trace of original nescience, neither time nor objectivity has any place in it. It is the experience of Pure Consciousness which is identical with the Blissful Self. He was ever established in the unique majesty of the Self, which is self-evident but yet hidden—that supreme experience of Bliss wherein one cares neither to seek nor to abandon, and which reveals all other values as mere trash.

(128-131) With the advent of the monsoon the clear and pure sky, now overcast with clouds and streaks of lightning, became dark and corrupted, just as the mind of a householder, under the influence of a seductive woman, becomes dark with infatuation and outbursts of hot passion. When the rains started, the lakes everywhere got filled with muddy water, and that filled the swans inhabiting them with anxious thoughts about their flight to Manasa lake (*mānasa-chintā*); for, whoever will not be filled with anxious thoughts (*mānasa-chintā*) when his life is in danger? The silvery moon (*kalāvān*) trudging through the clouded sky, looked dull and lustreless like a master of all arts (*kalāvān*) dressed in dirty clothes. Pray, how can a *kalāvān* (meaning both 'a learned man' and 'moon') avoid being lustreless when he becomes a *mali-*

nāmbara-dhāri ('dressed in dirty clothes' in the case of a learned man, and 'appearing in a clouded sky' in the case of the moon)? After a long period of anxious expectation, the host of *Chātaka* birds had now their thirst quenched with fresh rain water, just as 'spiritual aspirants striving hard' (*ghanāsraya-dhāri* meaning also *Chātaka* bird) attain to Immortality (*amritatva*, meaning also 'fresh water' in the case of *Chātakas*) after waiting for a long period of time.

(132-138) While in that season of heavy clouds and torrential rains, powerful winds were blowing all round, pulverising the forest trees with their heavy impact and threatening the lives of pedestrians moving about in the open, the great sage Sankara was sitting on the banks of the river Reva with its many human habitations, wrapt in deep spiritual communion and his organs of perception completely closed to external contacts. Thus, for five continuous days did Indra, the Lord of rain, harass the land with torrential showers and brilliant flashes of lightning, until consternation spread among the inhabitants of the place. The river Reva now got flooded, and as at the time of the deluge, its roaring waters began to carry away the trees and villages situated on its banks. The wild cries of the flood-stricken people reached the ears of Sankara. Seeing that his teacher was absorbed in Samadhi, he waited for a while watching the situation. Then uttering a powerful Mantra, he gathered all the flood waters into his water vessel, as Agastya in days of yore confined the waters of the ocean in the hollow of his palm.

Govindapada Commissioning Sankara

(139-149) Coming to normal consciousness from the state of Samadhi, Sankara's teacher Govindapada happened to hear about his disciple's prodigious feat from the reports of people. He was glad to note that Sankara had attained perfection in Yoga so soon. So, some days after the weather had cleared, he called Sankara to his side and spoke to him as follows: "Dear one! Look around and see how the sky has become clear and visible, as the Supreme Truth is at the dawn of Knowledge. The clouds and the Sannyasins move from place to place after fulfilling the needs of vegetation and men respectively—the clouds through rain and Sannyasins through spiritual instructions. See how the moon shines brightly in the sky

hat has been cleared of clouds. The intelligence of knowing ones also shines likewise when the obstructions of Maya are removed. When the clouds disappear, the stars too begin to shine. Just so do virtues such as benevolence and the like shine in a mind that has been rid of such passions as jealousy and anger. Look at the river with its clear waters. Does it not resemble the form of Mahavishnu? Like Goddess Sri ever clinging to Him, sparkling clarity (Sri) abides in these crystal-clear waters. As the lotus eyes and feet of Vishnu enhance His charm, so do the lotus flowers on the bosom of this river add to its beauty. In the whirlpools (*chakra*) on the surface of the river and in the waters filling its bed, you can visualise the Chakra(discus Sudarsana) held in Vishnu's hand and the worlds contained in His abdomen. As many incarnations like those of fish and tortoise (Matsya-Kachchapa) abide in Mahavishnu, numerous are the Matsyas (fish) and Kachchapas (tortoises) living in these waters. Like the Paramahamsas (holy men, also great swans) resorting to Him, this river is the resort of numerous great swans. Like a wealthy man turned into an ascetic, the clouds have yielded their long-acquired wealth of waters to birds (Dwijāḥ) and other creatures, abandoned their association with the bevy of beauties consisting of flashes of lightning, and are now walking away from their home in the skies. The season of spring that is now approaching is verily like a Yati (Sannyasin); for, all over its body it seems to have applied the ashes of moonlight; it is found holding in its hands the moon as a Kamandalu (a Sannyasin's water pot), and round its body it appears to be wearing a Kashaya (ochre) cloth constituted of the growth of red Bandhuka flowers. Like your own heart, purified and enlightened by knowledge, the waters of yonder lake are unperturbed, without impurities, without the fury of wind, majestic and attractive by the swans residing on its surface. The expansive sky, with the light clouds spread all over and the bright sun shining in it, simulates the broad chest of Mahavishnu decorated with white sandal paste and the brilliant Kaustubha gem. Just as the heart lotuses of meditative Yogis bloom when they face Hari (Mahavishnu) in contemplation, so are these lotuses in full bloom when the rays of the sun (Hari) in the high skies fall on their upturned faces. Look at these trees; they stand there like Sannyasins, smeared all over with their pollen for ashes, dressed in the ochre robes of tender leaves, wearing the Rudraksha beads of hov-

ering blue beetles, and holding the water pots of large flower buds.

(150-161) "Holy men generally spend the rainy season in one place in the observance of the vow of Chaturmasya when they occupy themselves with meditation and study. After that, as if to render the earth holy by the dust of their feet, they travel from place to place during the rest of the year. Therefore, you have now got to move to Varanasi, the city of Siva. There you are to clarify the essential spiritual truths revealed by the Vedas through your writings and preachings, which will act like a shower of rain on the forest fire of worldliness raging in the minds of men. Hear what the sage Vyasa once told me on this point. In the Himalayas the sage Atri once conducted a great Satra (sacrificial festival) when the Devas presented themselves in forms visible to the eyes. In that assembly the sage Vyasa discoursed on the subject of the truth of Brahman. I (Govindapada) then said to that great one: 'O great sage! You have divided the Vedas, written the Puranas and the Mahabharata. You have expounded the Yoga Sastra, and you have also composed the Vedanta-sutras (aphorisms on the Vedanta). Many scholars, representing different traditions, are interpreting these Sutras divergently. It is therefore necessary, O great sage, that you write a commentary on these Sutras, so that no one may in future interpret them as they please and cause confusion in the minds of men.' Hearing what I said, the sage Vyasa replied: 'Once the Devas went to the heaven of Siva to make a similar request. Now, for your information, I shall reveal to you the future a little. In course of time you will get a disciple who will be a master of all learning and an equal to me in all respects. You can recognise him by his miraculous feat of confining in his water-pot the waters flooding the river Reva. He will refute all heretical religions. He will also produce a great commentary on the Vedanta-sutras. All quarters will become white, as it were, with your fame as his teacher, just like all land when winter snow is falling.' What the sage then told me, I find confirmed by your advent and by what I have experienced. You are a unique personage. There is none equal to you in this world. You have to restore the spiritual greatness of the country by the production of many great writings on the Vedanta. So, O dear one, you hasten to the city of Siva, Varanasi, which is washed by the holy waters of the Ganga. There the Divine Mother will shower on you Her choicest blessings."

Sankara's arrival at Varanasi

(162-171) Though Sankara desired to stay all his life serving his teacher Govindapada, the latter sent him, his dear disciple, away on this world mission, though it be with tears in his eyes. He prostrated himself before the lotus feet of the Guru, and with great difficulty and deep sorrow at heart, took leave of him somehow. He then travelled up to Varanasi, a city on the banks of the Ganga, adorned with numerous sacrificial pillars of gold and having a forest of Nimba trees in its neighbourhood. He saw before him the Ganga, dotted with innumerable cottages on its banks—the blessing in the form of a river that mankind got as the fruit of Bhagiratha's great austerity and the ornament that adorns the locks of Siva. Maybe, because of its contact with Mahavishnu's nails (for it was formed of the waters with which His feet were washed by Brahma), or because it flows from the crown of moon-crested Siva, or because it originates in the snow of the Himalayas, the waters of the Ganga flowed in their crystalline clearness. Was that maiden of a river singing through the humming bees hovering over lotuses crowding her waters? Was she dancing as that expanse of lotuses got tossed in the winds? Was she smiling through the white foam released from her surface? And was she lifting up her hands to embrace her beloved by the high waves rising on her bosom? At one place her waters were blue, perhaps by the rays emitted by the bluish side-long glances of celestial damsels bathing in it; at others bright, by the reflection of their shining robes and ornaments; and at still others red, by the admixture of the Kunkuma dust with which they had smeared their bosoms. At the time of his bath in the Ganga, as the great teacher lifted up his head from its waters, his shining face looked like the crescent moon that had fallen down into the current of that holy river from Siva's matted locks, and after a dive therein, again reappeared in the firmament as the full moon with all its parts restored by the holy influence of those waters. His frame, with drops of the holy waters dripping all over, looked like a statue of Chandrakanta stone with moisture oozing by exposure to the cooling light of the moon. That noble personage thenceforth lived for sometime in the precincts of the holy shrine at Varanasi with the great satisfaction derived from the daily devoted worship of the Deity there, the great God Siva, who is the object of adoration of all gods including Mahavishnu.

CANTO 6

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PRISTINE PHILOSOPHY OF THE SELF

Advent of Sanandana *alias* Padmapada

(1-15) One day a Brahmana, learned in Vedas and of handsome and commanding appearance, went to see the Acharya and pay his respects to him. Being full of the spirit of renunciation and free from the bondage of a home and a spouse, he came to the Acharya and fell at his feet, recognising in him a seaworthy boat of a Guru that could help him cross this turbulent ocean of Samsara. Raising up the prostrating devotee, the Acharya said: "Who are you? Where do you come from? What is the purpose that emboldens you to approach me thus? Though you are young in years, you seem to be old in wisdom. Though alone, you seem to have the boldness of a crowd." The wise newcomer said in reply: "I am a Brahmana belonging to the Chola country where flows the great river Kaveri, whose waters have got the unique power of producing devotion in the minds of men who drink of it. I am going round the country to meet men of spiritual illumination, and in the course of my travels, arrived here recently. O merciful one! Deign to help me, sinking in the ocean of Samsara, to reach the shore of safety across it. Out of mercy for this weeping destitute, deign to pour the nectar-like rain of thy gracious looks on him. If thou hesitatest, pondering over my worthiness or otherwise for thy grace, thou wilt lose thy reputation for boundless grace, for grace is not conditioned by considerations of merit. The reputation one gains for mercy and kindness through liberality to the poor and the suffering cannot be had by making presents to the rich and the opulent. Men do not even notice a cloud that rains continuously for years in the midmost ocean, while they eagerly look for the clouds that bring at least a shower to a desert region. Permit me to bathe in the high-tide of thy instructions, in the nectar-ocean of thy wisdom, and thereby develop in myself the conviction: 'This life of Samsara is petty and worthless, being devoid of Brahmic bliss and contaminated by the baneful influence of ignorance which generates evil passions and

deceit in the mind'. None of the heavenly abodes of the deities presided over by sun, moon, wind or fire, nor even the heavens of Indra or Brahma, can have the least attraction for one in whom the spirit of renunciation has arisen out of faith and understanding of the doctrine of non-dualism preached by thee. I have no taste for enjoyments of the senses. All of them, including the pleasures of sex life, are vines that are poisonous in spite of their attractiveness. Even heaven with its refined enjoyments in the company of celestial damsels like Rambha pales into insignificance and offers no attraction for me. I do not desire to attain even to the state of Indra, the king of the Devas, or of Brahma the creator, as even these states are transitory. But I do yearn to be imbibing the flow of thy instructions, even as the Chakora eagerly drinks without stop the nectar of lunar light with which the full moon bathes the earth. May my mind, O Great Teacher, be ever inclined to do service unto thee, which promotes one's good here and hereafter, which destroys all worries and dangers in life, which is the fruit of one's many good deeds in the past, which prompts one to devote oneself to the uplift of the suffering, and which gives one relief from the baneful life of Samsara. Thou art the incarnation of that Sadasiva, praised in the Vedas as the best of physicians. Therefore, I, who am suffering from the ailment of Samsara, approach thee for treatment and relief." To him who pleaded thus, the great sage gave initiation into Sannyasa out of his mercy. It is said that he was the first of his disciples, and he came to be known by the name of Sanandana. Thus embarking him on board the ship of Sannyasa, the great navigator Sankara took this Brahmana youth across the ocean of Samsara in an instant.

(16-19) In Varanasi many others also of celestial origins, feeling the impulse of renunciation, came to serve Sankara and become his disciples. It is said that even such exalted sages like Vama Deva, who were free from doubts and had imbibed wisdom from the 'silent discourse' of Dakshinamurti (Siva), came to serve Sankara as disciples and help him in his spiritual mission to mankind. Adisesha (as Patanjali) seeks to satisfy aspirants by dealing merely with the science of sounds; the poet-sage Valmiki, by controversial writings full of fancies and poetic exaggerations; and Vyasa, by his long series of aphorisms which are difficult

to understand. But Sankara gives satisfaction to men by mere remembrance of him (and of his great commentaries that are noted for their profundity and lucidity). By the service of that great sage who resembled Mahavishnu Himself by his virtues, the citizens of Varanasi, that great city of liberation, had all the crookedness of their mind corrected.

Siva as an Out-caste confronts Sankara

(20-32) At Varanasi the great Acharya, surrounded by his disciples, shone like the disk of the sun amidst his rays, like the heavenly Kalpa-taru amidst its flowers, and like Indra girdled by his thousand eyes. It was at that time that the following incident took place one summer noon. The rays of the midday sun in the expansive sky, a prototype of the third eye of Siva on his forehead, were scintillating with sparks of fire, as they struck the granite slabs and scattered round about. The great magician sun was creating here and there pools of water on the parched sands, while simultaneously spreading out carpets of peacock feathers of variegated hues on crystalline pavements. To shield themselves from the heat of the sun, the swans had hidden themselves amidst the cluster of lotuses, the swarms of fish had all migrated to the midstream, and the peacocks had betaken themselves to caves, and the other birds to the hollows on trees. On one such noon, the great Acharya, desirous of doing his midday rites, walked with his disciples to the Ganga, whose surface looked discoloured by the pollen of lotus flowers. On their way, the party came across a hunter, an outcaste, approaching them with his pack of four dogs. They thereupon ordered him to move away to some distance and give them way. But the hunter raised an issue. He asked: "You are always going about preaching that the Vedas teach the non-dual Brahman to be the only reality and that He is immutable and unpollutable. If this is so, how has this sense of difference overtaken you? There are hundreds of Sannyasins going about, indulging in high-sounding philosophical talk, donning the ochre robe and exhibiting other insignias of holy life like the water pot and the staff. But not even a ray of knowledge having found entrance into their hearts, their holy exterior serves only to dupe house-holders. You asked me to move aside and make way for you. To whom were your words addressed, O learned Sir? To the

body which comes from the same source and performs the same functions in the case of both a Brahmana and an outcaste? Or to the Atman, the witnessing Consciousness, which too is the same in all unaffected by anything that is of the body? How does such differences as 'This is a Brahmana, this is an outcaste' arise in non-dual experience. O revered teacher! Is the sun changed in the least, if it reflects in a liquor pot or in the holy Ganga? How can you indulge in such false sentiments as, 'Being a Brahmana I am pure; and you, dog-eater, must therefore, give way for me'—when the truth is that the one universal and unblemishable Spirit, Himself bodiless, is shining alike in all bodies. Forgetting out of infatuation one's own true nature as the Spirit—beyond thought and words, unmanifest, beginningless, endless, and pure—how have you come to identify yourself with the body which is unsteady like the ears of an elephant? If you say that your conduct is meant only for the guidance of the world, even then how can you explain such conduct in the light of the non-dualistic doctrine? Wonderful, indeed, is the magic of the great Magician which infatuates the ignorant and the learned alike!"

(33-39) When he had thus finished his submissions, the great Sannyasin, noted for his truthfulness and unblemished life, spoke to that outcaste with a mind struck with astonishment but none-the-less full of cordiality towards him. He said: "All that you have said is true. You are, indeed, one of the noblest of men. Your words of wisdom make me abandon the idea that you are an outcaste. Many in the world hear about the truth of the Vedanta; many contemplate on them; and many meditate on the Atman. But few, indeed, are those who succeed in giving up the sense of difference! A person who sees the whole world as Atman only, whose mind is unshakably established in that conviction—is worthy of worship, irrespective of whether he is a Brahmana or an outcaste by birth. 'I am the same Pure Consciousness which shines alike in Mahavishnu as also in flies. All objective phenomena are false'—he who is ever established in this Consciousness is my Guru worthy of respect, be he an outcaste by birth. All objects presented to Consciousness are false and, therefore, unreal; what is left after this elimination is Pure Consciousness alone; and that Pure Consciousness is the 'I'. A man established in such an awareness is, indeed, a Guru to me."

(40-43) Scarcely had he finished speaking when the outcaste disappeared from sight, and in his place appeared Lord Siva with the crescent moon in His matted locks and the four Vedas accompanying him. Thereupon, moved by joy, awe and devotion, Sankara began to glorify that Ashtamurti Siva with a hymn of praise: "I am Thy servant when I am conscious of myself as the body. I am Thy part, O Three-eyed one, when the awareness of Jiva dawns on me.. And when the Atman consciousness becomes established, I recognise myself as one with Thee. Such, indeed, is the teaching of all scriptures. By realising which all the dullness of ignorance within and without is eradicated; to contain Which there is no receptacle; to burnish Which there is no grinding stone; to excavate Which there is no mine; and to attain Which the all-renouncing monks make great efforts in solitude—to that Being, the crest jewel of all the Sastras, my salutations! The Sastra is of no use unless it is accompanied by the teacher's grace. Grace is useless unless it generates 'awakening'; and 'awakening' is purposeless unless it gives the knowledge of the Supreme Truth. To that Supreme Truth, who is not different from myself and who fills the understanding with wondrous rapture, my salutations!"

Siva commissions Sankara

(44-51) To that great Sannyasin who fell at His feet with tears of devotion in his eyes, the great God Siva said thus: "You have realised My true being. I have tested the depth of your spiritual understanding. My blessings rest on you and Vyasa alike. Vyasa edited the Vedas; he composed the Brahma-sutras (aphorisms on the subject of Brahman); and therein he refuted the doctrines of the Sankhyas, Kanadas and others. Taking only a few stray passages from the Vedas, they produced commentaries out of evil intention. Intelligent people find no worth in their writings. Therefore, you who have got a real understanding of the purport of the Vedas, should write a new commentary on the Brahma-sutras, wherein the false theories have to be refuted both through reason and scripture. The commentary you are going to produce will receive praise even from exalted beings like Indra, and it will be specially honoured in the assembly of Brahma. Defeating Bhaskara, Abhinavagupta, Neelakantha, Mandana, and the rest, you spread the knowledge of the Truth in the world. Then appoint

competent disciples, resembling the sun in driving away the darkness of ignorance, as guardians of the Vedic path in different parts of the country. Having accomplished all this, you return to My state with the satisfaction of having fulfilled your mission."

Departure to Badarī and writing the Bhashyas

(52-63) After commissioning him thus, Lord Siva disappeared along with the Vedas who accompained him (in the guise of dogs), and Sankara and his disciples walked towards the Ganga, their minds athrill with the experience they had. His noon-day rites over, Sankara thought over the instructions of Lord Siva and took steps to write a commentary on the Vedantic aphorisms of Vyasa for the good of the whole world. Having obtained through Siva's grace the requisite capacity for this work, Sankara left the city of Kasi joyfully, even as an elephant leaves aside without any concern a lotus bud when disturbed very much by the honey seeking bees hovering about it. For, the city of Kasi, famous as Mokshapuri (the city of liberation), and resorted to in large numbers by the honey-bees of liberation-seekers, had little significance for a Brahman-knower like Sankara, as a lotus bud is to an elephant sporting in a lake. Moreover, the congregation of honey-suckers in the shape of the aspirants there, was now a disturbance to him bent upon his great scholarly work, and it was therefore with great relief that he left the city in spite of its evident charms. "The Emperor of the Realm of Advaita is going away"—thinking thus at dawn, and desirous of doing him honour, the Dame of Western Horizon held up the ceremonial umbrella of a pale setting moon, while the Mistress of the East lifted the *chowri* of scattered rays of the rising sun. Before leaving, moved by his regard for that holy place, Sankara went round and took dips in all its sacred pools, and then started on his journey to the distant Badari. The way to Badari was long, treacherous and difficult to traverse, like the mind of a wicked man. In some places the heat was intolerable; in others, the cold. The path was straight sometimes, at others extremely crooked. Some places were full of thorn, others free from it. Seeking relief in the experience of the immutability and the unruffled poise of the Atman, he traversed all that way like any ordinary pilgrim in the company of other travellers trudging on

foot, eating whatever was available, and resting at any convenient spot. Travelling long distances through difficult forest tracks, he reached the holy Badari in whose terrian flowed rapid Himalayan streams and whose caves were resorted to by celestial women. There he held many discussions with resident sages on the six systems of heterodox and seven systems of orthodox philosophies and on the nine categories, and after thus clarifying his thoughts and ascertaining the purport of the Vedas, he wrote in his twelfth year his most profound and attractive commentary on the Vedanta-Sutras of Badarayana. He also wrote commentaries on the principal Upanishads, beginning with the Isa, which give very clear expositions of the doctrines concerning the Supreme Atman. Next he commented on the Song Celestial, the Bhagavad Gita, which forms the core of the Mahabharata, as also on Sanatsujatiya, Nrisimhatapani and Vishnusahasranama. He also produced many treatises like Upadesasahasri, which are all so sublime that they can instil strong renunciation in a Sannyasin studying them and help in the removal of one's ignorance of the spiritual nature of the Self.

Some Incidents after Leaving Badari

(64-71) When the sun of Sankara thus rose on the horizon and began to shine there, the darkness of false scriptural expositions along with the dim moonlight of sophistical arguments disappeared from the firmament of thought. He now began to teach his disciples his great commentaries, a veritable ocean which no solar heat of perverted arguments can dry. Among his disciples, to all of whom he was equally dear, some like Sanandana attained to great prominence because of their inherent worth. Sanandana rose in wise men's estimation because of his very austere life, his devotion to study and his capacity to understand the subtleties of philosophic thought. Moved by deep affection for that devoted disciple, he taught him his commentaries three times, revealing the highest truth of the Vedas. This made the other disciples rather jealous of him. So, in order to convince them of his inherent superiority, Sankara one day called that disciple, who was then standing on the opposite bank of the Ganga, to come to him immediately. Thereupon, when he stepped into the Ganga with the conviction that devotion to the feet of the Guru, which had enabled him to go across the ocean of Samsara, would surely not

fail him in crossing this river, the holy Ganga brought out lotuses to support him wherever he placed his feet on her waters. When at last he reached his teacher after crossing the river in this incredible manner, Sankara clasped him to his breast with overwhelming love and wonder, and gave him the name of Padmapada, the lotus-footed one.

(72-78) One day when spiritual doctrines were being discussed in an assembly of saintly philosophers, some Pasupatas, full of ignorance and resulting pride in their perverse doctrines, raised various objections to the teachings of the Vedanta in a spirit of arrogant controversy. With the help of scriptural quotations and their proper interpretations, Sankara controverted their doctrines and humbled their pride of learning. He argued: "If your doctrine is that liberation consists in attaining to similarity with Iswara, how can you maintain that the difference between Him and the Jiva is absolute? You may maintain the position that similarity is achieved through meditation on Him. But then liberation would become an effect and, therefore, perishable like all effects. You would probably say that the qualities of Iswara percolate into the Jiva at the time of Moksha. This is also fallacious. You forget that the inherent quality of a substance is not a part of it but one with it, and it cannot be separated from it, unless a part of the substance itself is separated from it. If you contradict this by saying that here the quality of one thing is transforming another, as happens when the air is made fragrant by the sweet smell of flowers, you have to remember that this is not done by flowers as such, but by a particular part of it, the pollen, which alone is sweet smelling. When all the pollen goes, the flower is left odourless. So, if the inherent quality of Iswara should go into the Jiva, the quality alone cannot enter. Either the whole of Iswara has to enter, or a part of Him. In the first case He is totally destroyed at once, and in the second case, little by little." Struck by such powerful arguments, as a poisonous serpent by the wings of Garuda, the Tantrikas of the Pasupata school shed the display of their overweening pride, as the snake so struck abandons the emission of the fiery flames of its poison.

The Greatness of Sankara's Works

(79-96) While the great teacher was thus a terror to contro-

versialists, he evoked admiration in others by his commentaries. Like the sun he stimulated the heart-lotus of numerous disciples and followers to blossom by his achievements, and his spreading fame became an adornment of floral decorations to the whole world. This lion of a sage, having logical arguments as his sharp claws and molars, ranges the forest of the Upanishads, causing destruction among the elephants of sophists ravaging that forest. It is said that, in utter astonishment at the superhuman achievements of this boy ascetic, the learned men of Kasi said amongst themselves: "How many are the savants—Prabhakara, Bhaskara, Mandana, Gupta, Murari and the like—that have met with utter defeat at the hands of this boy!" Seeing his great scholarship, it seems the great God Siva Himself appeared before him and asked him to write a commentary on Vedanta Sutras. In days of old, the cow of Vedic teachings was hurled in to the swamp of obscurity and confusion by the misinterpretations of crafty thinkers. It was the sage Badarayana who rescued it from that swamp by his re-statement of the teaching in the Vedanta Sutras. Now Sankara has cleaned that cow of all the mud and mire adhering to it, by his commentary on those Sutras.

The cow of the Vedas, which yields the milk of Karma-fruits and which used to occupy the stables of pious Brahmanas devoted to Yagas and Yajnas, was cast into the mud and mire of false arguments by wicked people in the shape of its critics. Sankara has now cleansed that cow of all that dirt by washing it with the pure waters of his commentaries. The Upanishads are like a damsel who was thrown into utter neglect by some hostile thinkers who condemned her teachings as false. Others, the followers of the Vedic Karma-Kanda, accepted her but only as a handmaid of their favourite Vedic ritualism. Still others, who seemed to receive her with cordiality, proved to be very treacherous custodians, as they indulged in every kind of perverse interpretation to suit their own purposes. It is only now, at the hands of Sankara, that she has at last received fair treatment and come to enjoy an era of peace and happiness after all this long period of frustrated and vegetative existence. The Atman was about to be slaughtered by the Buddhists by their philosophy of Nihilism. Kanada, the founder of Nyaya-Vaiseshika system, somehow saved him by establishing the existence of the Atman. Next, Kumarila Bhatta, the founder of

the philosophy of Vedic ritualism, showed him the direction to reach his destination. The Samkhyas under Kapila removed his miseries by their doctrine of Kaivalya or aloofness. The Patanjalas put more vitality into him by their teachings on the control of the Prana. It was, however, only Sankara who mercifully raised the Atman, from misery to the very status of the Supreme Being through his doctrine of the identity of the individual spirit with the Supreme Being. Some/like the materialist Charvakas did not at all perceive the Atman, because to them he looked swallowed up by the Bhutas (meaning both 'the body made up of the five Bhutas or elements' and also 'demons'). Others like the Yogachara Buddhists recognised the Atman as just a momentary existence only; so, their perception of him was very faint. Still others like the Naiyayikas and the Mimamsakas perceived the Atman distinctly in separation from the Bhutas. The Samkhyas, too, recognised the distinctiveness of the Atman from the Bhutas and all their movements. But none of them perceived that the Bhutas (meaning 'elements' and 'demons') were in themselves unreal entities having no existence, and were, therefore, not able to free their followers from fear of them. It was given to Sankara, the incarnation of Siva, to declare and demonstrate the unreality of these Bhutas, and thus free the Atman completely from fear. The Charvaka materialists rejected the Atman, calling him a mere illusory entity. The pluralists of the Kanada school rescued him by defining him as a definite entity with powers of knowing and willing. The Mimamsakas of the Bhatta school, however, reduced him to slavery by making him subserve the ends of Vedic ritualism. The Sankhya dualists saved him from this, but only to make him into an elephant-keeper riding on the elephant of Prakriti. It was Sankara alone who enthroned him as the Almighty Himself! How can any one who has enjoyed the felicities offered by the heavenly creeper of Sankara's commentaries, abounding in the tender leaves and flowers of literary beauty and philosophic wisdom, entertain, even through infatuation, an attraction for other teachers' apology of commentaries, which, with their hollow contents and laboured styles, are a blot on Saraswati, the Goddess of learning? Literary men in general have their minds rendered weak by the numerous shafts of sensual passions inflicted on them by the hunter Cupid. Their writings are, therefore, useless in releasing man from his bondage, or

in giving, any true and ennobling enjoyment. What wonder is there if such writings do not command the respect of those whose minds have been purified by the non-dualistic outlook advocated by the Acharya's writings? If one tries to produce a work in imitation of the Acharya's writings, which, by their clarity, sweetness and power, surpass a river of nectar, what one achieves will only be an artificial channel with a lean flow, utterly insignificant before the current of the mighty Ganga issuing from the matted locks of Siva. By his hymn of Kanaka-Lakshmi he brought prosperity to a poor family; by his hymn called Soundaryalahari he has revealed the unique glory of the Divine mother; by his Siva-bhujanga he has produced a cure for the obsession of fear in men. How wonderful and varied are his works! They present a veritable Devaloka, the heaven of Indra. For, the flow of words in them is a rain of flowers from celestial trees; the grandeur of their meanings is the glow of rubies worn by celestial women in their hair; and the abundance of implied wisdom they contain is like the limitless delicious milk in the udder of the heavenly Kamadhenu. His works are, indeed, like a bunch of luscious banana fruits—their meanings, the hunger-appeasing capacity; their implications, the attractive flavour; and their sweetness of diction, the delicious juice. Even a single fruit of a verse from that bunch of his writings is enough to give the highest delight and satisfaction to wise men and spiritual aspirants. Possessed, as they are, of matchless beauty of form like a bouquet of jasmine flowers, pregnant with meanings like a newly blossomed lotus full of nectar, and carrying the aroma of sanctity like the fragrance of the flowers of the celestial tree, his works will provide thrills of deep joy and spiritual inspiration to all who approach it.

(97-107) It is said that, animated by jealousy and ill-will on hearing such glorious praise of Sankara's commentary, some followers of Gautama's Nyaya philosophy inhabiting some region of the Ganga's banks, once went to Sankara for a controversy. They held the view that inference is the only way to knowledge. Their confrontation with the Acharya was excelled in stupidity only by the attack of moths against fire. Such controversies and attacks of critics only helped to highlight the excellence of his commentaries. For, see how the lustre of gold is only enhanced when subjected to heating and hammering. The moon of commentaries

that rose from the milk-ocean of the Acharya's genius rained its nectarine light on all the world of learning. The lunar light it shed, while satisfying the Chakoras of the wise, drove away the darkness of sophistry from among scholars. The Amrita (immortal drink) of his commentaries, churned out of the eternal milk-ocean of Vedic wisdom, saved spiritual aspirants from the senility and old age of ignorance, and conferred on them the immortality of divine knowledge. The light shed by the sun of his commentaries caused the blossoming of the heart-lotus of good men, the removal of the darkness of ignorance, and the expulsion of the owls of sceptical critics. The Amrita of Sankara's commentaries, born of the milk-ocean of the Vedas, on being churned with the Mandara mountain of logical thinking, confers immortality on wise men who consume it even in this life. The holy Ganga issued only from the feet of Vishnu, whereas these commentaries flowed from the mouth of Siva. The former only *drowns* the earth and its inhabitants in its floods, while the latter saves men *drowning* in the flood of Samsara. The sage Vyasa offered to the world a collection of golden beads of Vedic wisdom strung together with his *Sutras* (meaning 'string' as also 'aphorisms') into a necklace. But scholars could not go in for it, as its *Artha* (signifying 'value' as also 'meaning') was beyond their capacity. But today these have been brought within their reach through the liberality shown by the Acharya in writing his commentaries on them. The sage Vyasa, too, must be happy to see the necklace of the Sutras made by him on the necks of so many scholars. Wonderful is the benevolence of this great teacher! His commentaries are like a garland of jasmine decorating the coiffured tresses of the damsel of Vedas. They are like a fortune, a treasure, come into the possession of the Goddess of Learning. They are the fruits of the long prayers and austerities of sages. They are the manifestation of the indescribable sweetness and sanctifying quality of Vyasa's great work. All Jivas who have taken their last birth will certainly seek them. The great sage's work is like the mighty Mandara mountain in churning the ocean of Vedas and bringing out the nectar of wisdom contained in them, to the great edification of all wise men. By casting around the brilliance of his dialectical thought, they have not only scattered the accumulated darkness of perverse doctrines for travellers trudging along the high ways of spiritual seeking, but also revealed that

clear path for all good men to traverse. The doctrine of Brahmavidya that Sankara preached, which confers salvation through the elimination of all duality, reigns victorious over the country—from Rameswaram in the South, where Rama built his bridge dividing the seas, to the northern boundaries marked by the Himalaya mountains which bowed down with its peaks to Siva at the time of the conquest of the Tripuras; and from the Eastern Mountains where the sun rises, to those of the West where he sets.

CANTO 7

THE MEETING WITH VYASA

Sankara in Confrontation with Sage Vyasa

(1-21) Once, seated on the banks of the Ganga, the Acharya was teaching his commentaries to his disciples till late in the noon. Finding the disciples exhausted, the Acharya closed the session and got up, when he was confronted by an old Brahmana with the question: "What are you teaching, Sir? And may I know who you are?" Thereupon the disciples intervened and said: "This is our teacher, the great Acharya Sankara, the master of all the Upanishads, who has established the doctrine of Non-dualism through his commentaries on Sārīraka-sutras (Brahma-sutras)." The Brahmana thereupon remarked: "O Sannyasin teacher, this seems unbelievable. These people say that you have commented on the Sutras of Vyasa. If you are as learned as that, let me hear you expound any one Sutra of Vyasa." "My salutation to all exponents of the Sutras!" replied Sankara, "I do not claim to be a master of the Sutras. Still, if you question me on them, I shall try to answer to the best of my knowledge." The Brahmana thereupon quoted the first Sutra (*tadantarapratipattau ramhati samparişvaktaḥ praśna-nirūpaṇābhyām*) from the third chapter of Brahma-sutras, and asked Sankara to explain it. To this Sankara replied: "In the light of the conversation between Gautama and Jabali in the Thandila-sruti, this Sutra means that at the time of death the Jiva departs clothed in the subtle essence of the Bhutas or elements." The learned Brahmana then raised numerous objections to this interpretation to the utter astonishment of all the scholars assembled there. Thereupon Sankara answered the criticisms and attacked the thesis of the Brahmana in several ways. Thus, the conversation turned into a learned disputation extending over eight days between these two, who resembled Adisesha and Brihaspati in learning. When the two were thus engaged in this prolonged debate, Padmapada, who got an inkling of the identity of the new-comer, said at last: "This Brahmana is none other than that very Vyasa, the knower of the essence of all Vedantas and the author of these Sutras. He is an incarnation of Mahavishnu.

And as for yourself, Sir, you are Siva Himself. What are we, your servants, to do when you two clash in such an endless and keen debate!" On hearing the surprising revelation of the identity of the opposing scholar, Sankara at once saluted him with palms closed, sang his praise with a new hymn he composed on the spot, and said: "Thy deer-skin covering, rain-cloud complexion, white sacred thread, matted locks, and shining diadem reveal thee to be Vyasa himself. Thy life and work have mitigated the banefulness of this age of Kali. If thou approvest of the commentary I have produced on thy Aphorisms which deal exhaustively with Truth transcendental and temporal, then deign to pardon my lapses and reveal thy true nature to me." At these words, the sage revealed his real form with matted locks like a heap of golden wires, with a radiant complexion resembling that of rain-cloud surrounded by streaks of lightning, and with fingers held in Chinmudra indicative of the granting of all favours. With a water pot made of lustrous material in hand, his frame spread its pleasant luminosity all round like the moon in the tight embrace of night, or like the blue Tamala tree with bright white flowers all over it. His head was encircled by a string of twenty-seven pearls, as if they were the twenty-seven stars (Nakshatras), the wives of the moon, assembled to honour the sage who was the greatest friend of the lunar dynasty of kings. With his matted locks, markings of holy ashes, staff, Rudraksha beads and tiger skin, he looked in every way fit to be a companion of God Siva. By the use of the sharp goad of Advaita philosophy he had brought under control the mad elephant of egotism, and with the cords of his aphorisms he had tied the numerous cows of Vedic passages to the post of his philosophy. The sage, reputed to be teacher of teachers and invisible to mortal eyes, now stood there, accompained by his disciples, casting his benign glance all round to the great joy and relief of those on whom it fell.

Sankara in Praise of Vyasa

(22-31) Seeing him thus in front, a rare sight for any embodied being, Sankara advanced towards him with his disciples. With great devotion and fervour, they all prostrated themselves at his feet and addressed him thus: "O Sage Dwaipayana! Our obeisance to thee. By seeing thee, we have attained the highest end of

human life. It is in line with thy vow of devoting thyself to the service of others that thou hast now come to make us blessed by giving thy *darsan* to us. Thou didst produce the vast Pouranika literature consisting of eighteen Puranas which form an exposition of the teachings of the Vedas. Who else could compose even a few verses so full of sublime import! Seeing that the ordinary student of the Vedas will not be able to grasp that vast body of sacred literature in all its comprehensiveness, thou didst divide it into four, with different recensions. Thou art verily endowed with the knowledge of the present, past and future; for, otherwise, how couldst thou compose the Bhavishyad Purana which speaks not only of the past but also of future events? In the milk-ocean that is thyself, dawned the moon of Mahabharata, whose light dispels the darkness of ignorance both spiritual and mundane. From thee have originated all the Sastras—the Vedas, the Vedangas, the Mahabharata and the Puranas. All these have been either produced or edited by thee. Thou art the heavenly Kalpataru (wish-yielding tree) that had its origin in an island. In the shape of the various Vedic recensions, thy numerous branches have spread everywhere. On one of these branches is seated that famous parrot, thy son Sri Suka, whose warblings continue to delight the worlds. From that tree are falling, for the benefit of men resting at its foot, the four great fruits of life—Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. Thou art indeed a novel Sri Krishna, more unique than that unique incarnation. If Krishna held the Lord of Mountains (Govardhana) in hand for seven days to relieve the few inhabitants of the cowherd settlement, thou hast manifested thyself, holding the Lord of Mountain (God Siva) in thy heart for all time for the good of men at large. If Sri Krishna protected the cows grazing in the forests, thou art protecting the cows of the Vedas in thy mouth. If Krishna required a full battle to destroy the Asura named Naraka, thou art removing the Jiva's miseries of Naraka or hell by a mere look. That Being is neither existent nor non-existent, neither within nor without—with such contradictory expressions the Vedas describe thy glory as the Supreme Being—Mahavishnu."

(32-39) Praised in this manner, the illumined sage sat on a seat offered to him and began to speak as follows to Sankara who kept standing before him in all humility: "I know the depth of

your scholarship. You are in every way equal to me in your learning. You are as dear to me as my son Suka. Do not think that I came to you for a mere debate. In the assembly at the heavenly abode of Siva I heard from the Siddhas that you have written a commentary on Vedanta Sutras. I was very glad to hear this, and I came desirous of seeing you, the commentator." Hearing these words, the great Sannyasin, Sankara, who could be called the full moon of Vedantic wisdom, spoke to the sage, his body covered with horripilations indicative of his inward joy: "Though I am very insignificant in comparison with thy great disciples like Sumantu and Paila, still out of thy pure goodness and mercy thou art looking upon me as worthy of thy recognition. To the luminous sun of thy Sutras shedding light on all doctrines of the Vedanta, I have only done an Arati by way of honouring it, with my commentary. Considering me as a disciple of thine, please pardon me for this foolhardy venture of mine, and condescend to give a critical estimate of it, correcting whatever mistake thou findest in it."

Vyasa Blessing Sankara with a Longer Lease of Life

(40-50) From the hands of Sankara who was addressing him thus, Vyasa took a copy of the Bhashya and went through its contents, noting its clarity and profundity. He appreciated very much its methodology, consisting first in elucidating the meaning of the Sutras in simple words synonymous with them, then refuting the opposite views in an original way with the help of sound reasoning, and next, giving a positive exposition of the doctrine in words that are in agreement with reason and scriptures. He then said: "Dear boy, I have gone through your commentary carefully. In no way can it be called a foolhardy enterprise as you characterised it. You asked me to make a critical estimate of it, showing its merits and demerits. To do that will, indeed, be foolhardy. You are unrivalled in your grasp of the technique of interpreting Vedic passages. You have unusual mastery of grammar. And besides, you are a disciple of Govindapada. How then can there be any mistakes in your writings? You, who were able to reject the life of sense enjoyment from your very boyhood as the sun rejects darkness, and have taken to the life of Sannyasa, can never be considered an ordinary man. You must necessarily

be a great man full of wisdom and philosophic insight. Who else but a man of your calibre can give such a clear and lucid commentary on my aphorisms, terse in language, vast in meaning, and subtle in implications? Scholars say that it is difficult to understand what exactly these aphorisms mean; so terse are they in expression. Hence it is said that the difficulty of any one who interprets them is in no way less than that of the one who composed them. Who else but an incarnation of Siva could grasp all the implications of these Sutras and produce a commentary on them, thereby elevating the Vedas to their dignified position from the degradation to which they have been subjected by the Samkhyas and other philosophers. Though you share the same name 'Sankara' with God Siva, you are unique and seem to excel even that Divinity in many respects. You have no trace of anger in your heart, which cannot be said of Siva who is noted for irritability. You entertain within yourself all *Kalas* or branches of learning, whereas Siva has only one *Kala*, the crescent moon, and that, on his head. You are fully saturated with *Girija* or knowledge born of Vedas, whereas God Siva has only one half of his shared by *Girija*, his consort Parvati. Many have made commentaries on my aphorisms in the past and many will do so in future also. But none of them has been able to know their real meaning as I conceive it; only you have. With the help of this commentary on the Vedanta Sutras and many allied writings, may you refute all opposing doctrines and, thereby, become famous in the world! Now permit me to depart. My heart is leaping with joy at your achievements."

(51-58) At this Sankara said: "I have already written the commentaries, expounded them, and also refuted all hostile doctrines. What else have I got to do? Nothing more. I have come to the end of the sixteen years' span of my life, and so shall presently give up this physical body of mine in thy presence. Please tarry a while at Manikarnika and witness it." Hearing this, the sage Vyasa thought for a moment and said: "No, you should not end your life now. There are many more learned men, leaders of hostile schools of thought, whom you have not yet defeated in debate. Your life has to be prolonged for some years more, so that you may triumph over them also. Otherwise, the orphaned infant of aspiration for spiritual freedom, that has taken birth from you

for the good of mankind, will perish prematurely with no parent to take care of it. The intensity of joy that I experience by reading your very lucid and profound writing based upon your intuition of the Atman, prompts me to give you a boon. The Creator had given you only eight years of life. The satisfaction you gave to Agastya and other sages by your learning won for you an extension of your life's span by eight years more. May you live for another sixteen years by the blessing of God Siva! May your commentary shine till the end of time! During the rest of your life, may you uproot the doctrines of those who oppose the Advaita philosophy, and establish in them faith in this doctrine of the unity of all existence!" Hearing these words of Vyasa, Sankara who sanctifies the world by his holiness, said: "The greatness and reputation of thy Sutras are alone responsible for whatever popularity my commentaries on them have gained or might gain." Saying so, he prostrated himself before that all-knowing sage, who for his part now departed, having bestowed that boon on Sankara for the prolongation of his life.

Sankara at Prayaga

(59-67) Though himself an illumined sage, Sankara felt sad at the departure of the great Vyasa. How can any person help feeling sad when the force of circumstances separates him from such centres radiating universal love? Sankara, the greatest among Sannyasins, somehow assuaged his own grief by feeling Vyasa's presence in his heart through meditation, and soon started, as desired by him, on a spiritual conquest of the whole land of Bharata. With a view to have an interpretative treatise (Vartikam) on his commentary written by Kumarila Bhatta, he first travelled towards the south where stands the Vindhyas, the resort of sage Agastya. Starting on this journey of spiritual conquest, Sankara, with a view to win over Kumarila, the staunch upholder of the ritualistic interpretation of the Vedas, first stopped at Prayaga where the blue waters of Yamuna and the sparkling clear waters of the Ganga meet like Vishnu and Siva and expiate the sins of those bathing at their confluence. The powerful flow of Ganga arrested the flow of Kalindi (Yamuna) by obstructing it, and the waters of the latter, therefore, stood still and shining like a woman whose movements are for the time-being paralysed by

the joy of an unexpected meeting with an intimate friend. In some parts of it where the water was clear and shining, there were swans residing, as disciples do in the teacher's residential academy. In others where the waters were dark, Chakravaka pairs found it convenient to stay as in the darkness of night. Even the Vedas declare that one bathing in these waters will go beyond death and disease, attain to a divine body and enjoy the delights of heaven. In these waters of the confluence of Yamuna and Ganga, whose uniqueness and mystery even the Vedas suggest by simultaneous descriptions couched in contradictory epithets as white and dark, Sankara had his bath, after which he recited verses in praise of that holy spot as follows: O Sanctifier! Thou hast the experience of being imprisoned in Siva's matted locks, and yet, by sanctifying the numbers of people who bathe in thee into holy beings like Siva, thou art enhancing for thyself the danger of being imprisoned in the locks of all of them. O Mother! Thy waters being of such transcendent purity, why is it that thou receivest into thee so much of unclean matter like human bones? O, I understand the reason on reflection! The large numbers of men who get transformed as Siva by contact with thy waters, have to be provided by thee with the bones required for decorating themselves as Siva, and that is why the bones of dead men are consigned to thee. Thou rousest into the wakefulness of the Spirit, those who are wrapt in the sleep and dullness of ignorance. But strange to say, thou art reputed also for converting men who have abandoned all hankering for sense objects into "*Dhurta*-bedecked" beings ('dhurta' meaning both 'sensuous men' as also 'a particular flower with which Siva is decorated')."

(68-76) Having thus praised the Triveni, he dipped himself in its holy waters along with his disciples, and while doing so, he also remembered his mother for whose purification too he prayed. And while after bath, he was resting on the shores of the river, refreshed by the fragrant and cool breeze, he heard the following news: "That Kumarila, who at one time established the superiority of the Vedas by jumping down from a mountain, by whose efforts the Vedic cult of sacrifices was re-established, thus enabling the Devas once again to get their food of sacrificial offerings—even he, the zealous votary of the Vedas, in order to be cleansed of the sin of betraying his teacher, is about to enter into a fire made

of paddy husk as an act of expiation for his sins. A master of the Vedas, a deep scholar in all branches of learning, and an accomplished dialectician, his wheel of fame is revolving in all the three worlds."

Meeting of Sankara and Kumarila

(77-105) Hearing this news, Sankara hastened to the place where Kumarila was, only to see him already standing in the oven of husk, with his illustrious disciples like Prabhakara standing around with tears in their eyes. Though the slow fire of paddy husk had already engulfed his body, his face could still be seen amidst smoke, fresh and blooming like a lotus surrounded by mist. He was himself like a flaming fire that destroyed all the detractors of the Vedas and saved those scriptures from being lost to society. Kumarila now saw nearby the great Acharya who was so holy that his very look effaced the sins of men. Though they had never met before, Kumarila, who had heard of Sankara's reputation, could easily recognise him. He, therefore, directed his disciples to give him a cordial reception, which Sankara thankfully accepted. Highly pleased with the hospitality, Sankara now showed his commentary of Kumarila; for even a faultless writing can prove its worth only after it has been examined by reputed authorities on the subject. After going through the commentary, Kumarila was highly pleased; for, though a follower of Purva-mimaṁsa and therefore a dualist, he was a noble-minded person. It is only the shallow-minded people who view everything with a controversial spirit. He said: "An explanatory thesis of at least eight thousand verses will be required even for a single subject like superimposition treated in this work. Had I not taken this vow, I would have produced such a Vartikam on your commentary. It is a very rare piece of good fortune to meet such holy men like you, especially at the time of death. It must certainly be due to some good Karma done by me in the past that I have been so blessed with your sight. Except association with holy men like you, there is no way of upliftment for men immersed in this fleeting life of the world. Long have I been entertaining the desire to meet you. At last it has been fulfilled. In this world it is not always that man's aspirations are satisfied. Time is the arbiter of man's fortune; it brings about fulfilments and disappointments to him.

I have disproved the positions of those who, accepting logic as the sole means of ascertaining truth, reject the scriptures. I have expounded the Vedic philosophy of ritualism; and I have lived a full life of the world with all its ups and downs. But I have not been able to overcome the power of time. I have committed two sins. One is that in my works I have rejected the idea of God. I have done this only to emphasise the importance of the Veda—to establish that the Veda is self-existent and self-certifying and requires no Iswara to establish its truth or validity. What I have done is to reject an Iswara as the cause of the world, and not an Iswara who is love and who redeems the world's sorrows. Next, I have committed *Guru-droha* or persecution of my own teacher. It came this way: The land became full of Buddhists, and the adherents of the Vedas dwindled. So I planned to overcome these Buddhists and re-establish the dominance of the Vedic religion. Their leaders, along with the disciples, have been going about converting all kings to their faith and instigating them to reject the Vedas. They have been trying to establish that the Veda cannot be accepted as a true scripture, because of the mutual contradictions of their teachings, and on account of their inherent irrationality. I found no one in the land powerful enough to oppose these nefarious activities of theirs. So I confronted the Buddhists in philosophic debates, but as I had no mastery of their philosophy and their system of dialectics, I was not able to refute all their arguments. So I went in disguise to a Buddhist monastery as a student and stayed there as one among its inmates. Once a leading Buddhist spoke in my hearing, criticising the Vedas. This brought tears into my eyes. Those who were near me saw this. From that day onwards they began to suspect my identity and my intentions. 'This man must be a Brahmana and an enemy of ours,' they began to murmur among themselves. 'He has come to study our philosophy surreptitiously. He must not be allowed to stay here any more. Somehow we must get rid of him.' Conspiring against me in this way, these prophets of Ahimsa took me by force to the top of a high building and pushed me down. I then resolved in my mind: 'If the Veda is truly revealed knowledge, then I shall not be hurt.' Thus, I linked the validity of the Veda with my life. Because I used the conditional 'if', expressive of doubt, and because I learnt the Buddhist scriptures by deception, I lost one of

my eyes in that fall as a punishment for these two sinful acts of mine. Such, indeed, is the will of God. Even one who teaches you a letter must be respected as a teacher. What to speak then of one who teaches you a whole branch of learning! The sin I committed in deceiving my teacher is, indeed, heinous. I learnt philosophy from the Buddhists, and afterwards managed to destroy their tribe. I also refuted the doctrine of Iswara, because of my acceptance of, and faith in, the Purvamimamsa doctrine of Jaimini. It is as an expiation for these two sins that I am at present courting slow death in a furnace fed by paddy husk. But now, by your very sight, I have become sinless, and the rite of expiation I am doing has become superfluous. I have heard of your commentary, and I had once thought of writing a *Vārtikam* (explanatory treatise) on it. But now it is too late to think about all that. I know that you are born to protect the doctrine of Advaita and thereby give joy to all good men. If I had obtained your *darsan* earlier, I need not have undertaken this expiation. Having taken this vow and entered into this slow fire, I have not the good fortune of gaining reputation by writing a treatise elucidating your commentary, as I had by my work on Sabara's commentary on the Purvamimamsa Sutras of Jaimini."

Kumarila accepting Sannyasa

(106-121) To the great Bhatta who spoke thus with a face like a partially open lotus, the Acharya said: "I recognise you as an incarnation of Guha born for the eradication of Buddhists. Sin can never affect you, as you are a disinterested worker for the good of the world. You have taken this vow upon yourself only for the world's welfare. I can save you even now from this fire by extinguishing it with water from my waterpot. It would, indeed, be fine if you write your proposed exegesis on my commentary." Addressed in this way by that great knower of Brahman, Kumarila, who was a firm adherent of right conduct, replied: "Great one! However generous and reasonable your suggestion may be, I am not prepared to do something that people would interpret wrongly. I should not set a bad example for them. It is true that by a mere glance of yours, you can restore a person to life even long after his death. It is only child's play for you to save me from the slow fire. Nevertheless, I do not wish to abandon this vow based on Vedic

dictum and, thereby, leave a bad name and a bad example behind. I know your powers very well. You are the one who creates and destroys the worlds. What wonder then if such a person offers to save me! Still I do not wish to escape from this self-imposed Vedic vow, and my decision to die in this slow fire remains firm. But, O great teacher, you will be doing me a great service and giving me the highest satisfaction, if you will initiate me into Brahma-vidya. If you could manage to defeat Mandana, famous among scholars as the greatest exponent of the ritualistic interpretation of the Vedas, your path for the establishment of the doctrines of Advaita as the true Vedic teaching will be clear of all obstacles. His defeat will be equivalent to the defeat of all scholars of this school. He is the champion of the gospel of ritualistic works and of life in the world. He is ever engaged in the performance of rituals. He is a householder of great wealth, fame and learning. You have got to defeat this great opponent of the path of renunciation, and for this I would advise you to go to his place immediately. His wife Ubhaya-bharati is also a great scholar. It is said that she is Saraswati herself born in a human body because of the curse of sage Durvasas. Mandana is superior even to me in his mastery of the philosophy of work. And among my disciples, he is the one dearest to me. Engaging yourself in debate with him, with Ubhaya-bharati as the umpire, you have to defeat him and make him your disciple. You can then entrust him with the duty of writing annotations on your works. As for myself, I have been able to meet you, who are equal to Siva Himself, at a critical period of my life. I crave you to be gracious enough to impart the knowledge of Brahman to me. Also I beseech you to remain here for a while until I die seeing before my eyes your form, which is the object of meditation for Yogis." Sankara therefore decided to impart to him the knowledge of Brahman, the knowledge that dispels one's ignorance about oneself and the world perceived outside. Kumarila then heard the words of Sankara imparting the knowledge of Brahman, and by his grace his sense of separate individuality was dispelled and he realised his oneness with the All-pervading Being. Sankara then proceeded to Mandana's place, traversing the sky.

CANTO 8

CONTROVERSY WITH MANDANA[1]

Towards Mahishmati to meet Mandana

(1-13) Bhagavan Sankara now left Prayaga, and travelling through the skies, reached the splendid city of Mahishmati which had gained great reputation as the residence of Mandana. Admiring the beauty and splendour of the numerous buildings of the city, he descended from the skies even like the sun at the close of the day, in a lovely wooded park of that place. There his physical exhaustion was assuaged by a gentle breeze coming through palm groves, carrying the cool water particles from the extensive sheets of lotus-flowers that covered its lakes. Finishing his morning rites and after resting a while, he started for Mandana's place along the road, before it was noon. On the way he met a number of maidservants going to fetch water in pots for use at Mandana's house. When he asked them for directions to find out Mandana's house, these women, wonder-struck at the sight of the imposing personality of Sankara, replied very respectfully: "You will find nearby a house at whose gate there are a number of parrots in cages, discussing topics like this: 'Has the Veda self-validity, or does it depend on some external authority for its validity? Are Karmas capable of yielding their fruits directly, or do they require the intervention of God to do so? Is the world eternal, or is it a mere appearance?' Where you find the strange phenomenon of caged parrots discussing such abstruse philosophical problems, know

[1] Mandana Misra is known by several names. He is known also as Oomveka, and as Viswarupa, besides as Sureswara after he became a Sannyasin under Sankara's influence. Probably Mandana Misra was the name by which he was known among scholars, while Viswarupa was the name given to him by his parents, and Oomveka, a pet name. His early history has already been described in Canto 3. It is to be noted that there is a well-known Vedantic text by name *Brahmasiddhi*, attributed to Mandana Misra. Whether this Mandana is the same as the ritualistic philosopher whom Sankara had to confront, is a matter of controversy, because the views of the author of *Brahmasiddhi* are mostly Vedantic and not of the ritualistic philosophy. It may be that the work is by the same Mandana after he came under the influence of Sankara, but that for some unknown reason his old name came to be attached to the work. But the greater possibility is that the ritualist Mandana

that to be the gate of Mandana's house." Sankara with his disciples spotted the house, but found its gates closed. So he dropped into the compound from the sky. There he had a total view of the famous scholar's residence which, with its mansions and gardens, resembled the heavenly abode of Indra himself. Entering a towering mansion, he got into the hall where Mandana was seated—Mandana famous for his learning and noble qualities, and imposing in appearance like Brahma himself. He saw the scholar washing the feet of the great sages Vyasa and Jaimini, whom he had brought there by the power of his Tapas to grace the occasion of a Sraddha ceremony he was performing that day. On seeing the two great sages, Sankara greeted them, and they, too, wished him in turn.

In Confrontation with Mandana

(14-31) Mandana, who was a confirmed follower of Vedic ritualism, was terribly annoyed to note that the newcomer without Sikah (tuft of hair) and Upavita (sacred thread) was a Sannyasin. As that great householder's wrath increased, Sankara's amusement also grew. In a desperate fit of anger Mandana burst out into a series of abusive interrogations. "Whence have you come, you shaven-headed fellow?" asked Mandana discourteously, meaning, by what way he came in, when the gates were closed. Taking the question to mean 'How far are you shaven?' Sankara replied, "Up to the neck". "That is not what I asked," said Mandana, "I asked (about) your way?" To this Sankara quipped, "Did you ask the 'way'? Then what did the 'way' reply?" Annoyed terribly, Mandana ejaculated: "It replied that your mother is a widow and that you are a widow's son." Unconcerned, Sankara humorously remarked: "Indeed! Did the 'way' tell you that 'you' are a widow's son? Then it must surely be so. For, it was you and not myself

---

who became Sureswara, under Sankara's influence, is a different person from the author of *Brahmasiddhi* and that the personalities of the two have got mixed up.

The place where Mandana, the ritualist, lived is another controversial matter. He was a resident of Mahishmati according to Madhava-Vidyaranya. But the text is not, however, clear about the situation of this place. In verse 28 in Canto 3, however, Mandana's paternal home is stated to be situated in the capital of Kashmir. Chidvilasa also seems to speak of him as a resident of Kashmir. Vyasachala speaks of him as a resident of Mahishmati in Vidarbha. According to Anantanandagiri

who questioned the 'way', and in the answer you received, the 'you' must surely refer to yourself." Further exasperated, Mandana exclaimed: "Have you drunk (*pitam*) toddy?" Quibbling on the meaning of the word '*pitam*', which means 'drunk' when used as a verb and 'yellow' when used as an adjective, Sankara took the question to mean "Is toddy yellow?" and gave an impertinent answer to that impertinent question. "Oh no! Toddy is not yellow but white." At this Mandana remarked with a mischievous insinuation, "I see, you are, therefore, well acquainted with its colour!" "And you with its taste!" promptly retorted Sankara. Again Mandana said: "You who indulge in such impertinent talk must be under the intoxication produced by eating poisoned (rotten) flesh." Interpreting the statement of Mandana differently (for the statement '*matto jātaḥ kalañjāśi*' can also mean 'the one born of me, i.e., my son, is an eater of poisoned flesh'), Sankara said: "You are right. As the father, so the son. If your son eats poisoned flesh, he must have learnt it only from you." Mandana, defeated on that front, raised another abusive issue and asked: "O vicious fellow! Is it that you have abandoned your Yajnopavita and your tuft, because they are too much of a burden to you? But having abandoned them, you seem to have burdened yourself with a bundle of rags too heavy even for asses." Sankara replied: "Even your father would not bear this load of a Sannyasin's rags that I am carrying. Instead, he continued to bear like an ass the burden of a wife (householder's life) till the end, in spite of getting kicks from her. For the life of the householder, characterised by Sikha and Yajnopavita, is, in the eyes of the Sruti, a mere burden for a man full of the spirit of renunciation. O fool of a fellow! You who cannot grasp this, must be a man of little understanding." At this Mandana said again: "The world knows what

---

he lived in Bijlabindu near Hastinapura. To identify these ancient names with their modern counterparts is difficult.

Telang, however, points out that Mahishmati is mentioned in *Raghuvamsa* (VI-43) as situated on the Narmada. In the *Magha* (II.64) it is represented as the capital of Sisupala. Dr. Garret's dictionary identifies it with Chuli Maheshvar. Thus all these three, the capital of Kashmir, Bijlabindu somewhere north of Delhi, and the banks of the Narmada—all these places divided by vast distances claim to to have been the residence of Mandana. It is a very strange situation indeed!

your much-vaunted Brahma-nishtha (devotion to knowledge of Brahman) is—it is loafing about with a bundle of books and a brood of disciples owing to one's incapacity to feed one's wife and look after her." Sankara retorted: "And pray, what is your Karma-nishtha (adherence to the life of Vedic ritualism)? It means, to become the servant of a woman after abandoning the service of the teacher owing to your incapacity to continue for long as a celibate Brahmacharin." Thereupon Mandana continued: "O fool! You were born of a woman. It was again a woman that brought you up. And still you are so ungrateful as to hate woman." Sankara retorted: "Having been born of a woman's womb, and fed at her breast, still how can you, O prince among brutes, bring yourself to seek sensuous enjoyments in her company like an animal?" "One who fails to tend the sacred fires (Garhapatya, Ahavaniya, and Dakshina) commits the sin of Virahatya (murder of one's son)", said Mandana, criticising the Sannyasins' practice of abandoning these sacred fires that a follower of the Vedas should maintain. Sankara retorted: "You who have failed to know the Self have committed Atmahatya (suicide)." "You are a thief," replied Mandana, "for you have come into my house stealthily like a thief, avoiding the notice of my gate-keeper." At this, Sankara observed: "You are the real thief; for, you eat your food without giving to Sannyasins and Brahmacharins their share as laid down in the scriptures." Now at his wit's end, Mandana attempted to beat a retreat, saying, "I should not be talking like this to a brutish fellow like you during the time I am engaged in ritualistic performances." Referring to a mistake in articulation in Mandana's speech (*sambhāshya aham* instead of *Sambhāshyoham*), Sankara said mocking, "From your committing *Yati-bhanga* (inappropriate pause), you are, indeed, giving an exhibition of your scholarship." Quibbling on the meaning of the word *Yati-bhanga* (which also means 'attacking and defeating a Yati or monk'), Mandana remarked: "When I am concerned with the defeat of a Yati (*Yati-bhanga*), what harm is there if I commit a *Yati-bhanga* (inappropriate pause)?" To this Sankara replied with another quibble: "Your presumption will be true, if you say 'defeat *by* a Yati' in place of 'defeat *of* a Yati'. For, the former is what is now happening." Continuing his abuse, Mandana said: "Where is Sannyasa in Kali-yuga, and where is Brahman

for a brutish fellow like you? You have put on the garb of a Sannyasin only as a means to get good food without any work." Sankara retorted: "Where is Agnihotra in Kali-yuga? And how can heaven be attained through all the foul actions involved in ritualism? Your garb of a ritualist is only a means to secure the licence for living with women."

Decision to Hold Debate

(32-38) Thus continued the war of words and wits between the two—Mandana proud and angry all the while, and Sankara calm and humorous. At this juncture the two sages present, Jaimini and Vyasa, intervened. While Jaimini looked at Mandana with a smile on his lips, Vyasa addressed him as follows: "Dear one, this behaviour of yours towards a Sannyasin, who is a knower of Brahman and who has abandoned all worldly desires, is quite improper. You have to see Mahavishnu in such an honoured guest and invite him for Bhiksha (food offering to a Sannyasin)." Thus admonished by sage Vyasa, Mandana immediately calmed down, and after doing Achamana, invited the Sannyasin for Bhiksha. To this Sankara replied: "I came here for *Vāda bhiksha* (an offering of philosophic disputation) and not a Bhiksha of edibles. And the wager in the disputation should be that the defeated one should become the disciple of the victor. My only objective in life is to spread the teachings of the Vedanta everywhere as the true gospel for men to follow for the attainment of salvation. I have not got the least interest in anything else. The Vedanta is the only panacea for man's ills in Samsara. It is a veritable moon for those suffering from the heat of worldly existence. Abandoning it, you are revelling in the cult of sacrifices. My mission in life is to establish the truth of the Vedanta by defeating in debate all who hold an opposite view. So, either accept the truth of Vedanta forthwith, or come for a debate and accept the Vedanta after defeat in debate."

(39-51) To Mandana, proud of his learning and his reputation, the bold and uncompromising challenge of the Sannyasin came as a fresh shocking experience. But without getting excited he replied as follows in a dignified manner: "Even if Adisesha, who marks the summit of learning, challenges me with his thousand tongues, I shall not hesitate to accept the challenge fearing defeat.

I shall not abandon the obvious teaching of the Vedas and follow the fanciful interpretation of it by you. To me who am ever awaiting the arrival of a competent scholar to enter into a debate, your arrival is a welcome and coveted opportunity for a resounding victory. Let us now hasten for the debate, and let the long watered plant of scriptural study come to fruition. This is a golden opportunity—a treasure-trove that has come to me unsought. I am not the man to abandon it. O good-looking youth! Remember that even Siva, the destroyer of Death himself, is sure to meet with defeat before me. But I am none the less eager to hear the sweet swan-song of your arguments. I am, indeed, an axe that extirpates the forest of an opponent's pride of learning. Pray, has not my resounding reputation for scholarship in all branches of learning reached your ears? How silly it is for you to say, I want *Vādabhiksha*! No prayer is required for that. It is ever ready. I have been long waiting with this offer, but I have not seen till now any opponent coming forward to accept it. I shall certainly enter into debate with you. I have not the least hesitation. But, a debate is not a mere wordy wrangle ending in parched throats. Its purpose is victory. In a debate, there should be two parties meeting in argument, and we two are those parties. There must be a proposition for which, or against which, the arguments are directed. Next it has to be fixed how success or defeat is to be determined, and what the consequence of such success or defeat should be. Then there is the question, who is to be the umpire. I am a leading householder. You are a learned Sannyasin. We must fix a wager beforehand, and then we can start our debate in the best of spirits, with a smile on our faces. This, indeed, is a very good day in my life, as I have got this day a demand for debate from a very worthy person like you. We shall start the debate tomorrow Now the day is far advanced. It is already noon, and I have got to perform my mid-day rites." With a smile on his face, Sankara agreed to this proposal. Mandana requested Vyasa and Jaimini to be the umpires at the debate. But they said, "No. Let your learned wife Ubhaya-bharati take the position of the umpire." For, they knew about the learning of the lady and her real identity with Goddess Saraswati.

(52-56) In deference to the words of the sages, Mandana made a decision on his immediate course of action. He extended a very

warm and ceremonious welcome to the three great personages who had arrived at his house, as if they were the three fires of the householder (Garhapatya, Ahavaniya and Dakshina). After the sages had taken their mid-day meal, they rested for a while and two young disciples of Mandana stood there fanning them with a white chowry. While the three sat there resting, they had among themsleves some private conversation, after which they came out of Mandana's house. The two of them, Jaimini and Vyasa, soon went their way, while Sankara fixed his abode at a temple on a river bank amidst a grove of palms. Being highly pleased with the providential meeting he had with the two great sages, Sankara conversed with his disciples for sometime on his meeting and talks with Mandana and spent the night in the cool and pleasant atmosphere of the temple on the river bank.

The Great Debate with Mandana

(57-62) At dawn, when the infant sun had begun to redden the eastern horizon with his fresh radiance, Sankara, the wisest among men and the best among knowers of Brahman, completed his morning duties, and accompanied by his disciples, proceeded, ready for debate, to Mandana's house, where several learned scholars had already assembled to attend that intellectual contest. As previously fixed, Mandana's learned wife, Ubhaya-bharati, who was none other than Saraswati embodied in a human form, was to be the president and umpire at that learned assembly, where Mandana presented himself for debate with Sankara. The devoted wife that she was, Ubhaya-bharati, who was as handsome as she was learned, accepted the proposal conveyed to her through her husband to be the arbiter in the intellectual contest between himself and the Sannyasin Sankara, and she adorned the presidential seat like the real goddess Saraswati herself. In the midst of that enthusiasm of debate prevailing in the assembly, Sankara, the great Sannyasin and the most learned of men, came forward first to announce his proposition of the unity of all existence as follows: "Brahman the Existence-Consciousness-Bliss Absolute is the one ultimate Truth. It is He who appears as the entire world of multiplicity owing to dense ignorance, just as a shell appears as a piece of silver. Just as, when the illusion is dispelled the silver is sublated by, and dissolved into, its substratum, the shell, so also, when

ignorance is erased, the whole world is sublated and dissolved into its substratum, Brahman, which is the same as one's own Atman. This is supreme knowledge as also Moksha (liberation), and it brings about the cessation of future births. The Upanishads, which form the crown of the Vedas, are the authority in support of this proposition. I am sure to prove this and be victorious in the debate. If, however, I am defeated, I shall cease to be a Sannyasin, abandon my ochre robe, and assume the white dress. Let Ubhaya-bharati be the umpire to determine success or failure."

(63-65) When Sankara had finished making his declaration, Mandana, the great householder, made his, emphasising the teachings of his faith, as follows: "The Vedantas or the Upanishads cannot be a proof of a subject-objectless Pure Consciousness, unoriginated and infinite. For, words can reveal only objects which are originated entities, but never a pure subject-objectless Consciousness, which does not form an effect. Therefore the non-Vedantic part of the Veda, dealing with such effects produced by works, is the real Sabda-Pramana (verbal testimony). In the light of it, actions alone constitute the steps leading to Moksha, and embodied beings have to perform action (Karma) till the end of their lives. If I happen to be defeated in argument. I shall take to the life of Sannyasa. As requested by you, let my wife Ubhaya-bharati, who is learned enough for the work, be the judge in this contest."

(66-73) Thus solemnly undertaking that the defeated party should adopt the Ashrama (mode of life) of the victor, and making the learned lady the umpire in the contest, they started the debate with their hearts firmly set on victory. As these two learned savants began to debate with great avidity after finishing their respective daily rites, Ubhaya-bharati, who took her post as the umpire, came forward and put two wreaths on the necks of both the contestants and declared: "That person is to be considered defeated whose wreath is seen to fade." Having so arranged, she went to the inner apartments of the house for completing her household duties as also to cook the Bhiksha (or food offering) for the Sannyasin and meals for the master of the house. As the debate started, Brahma and the Devas, who were eager to attend it, assembled in the sky above that house. Quoting authority after authority from the Veda and supporting the same with weighty

arguments they conducted the debate in a highly dignified manner, each contending party showing due respect to the other. As days passed, the debate became keener and keener and larger and larger numbers of scholars swelled the audience. It was remarkable that though both of them were vitally interested in victory, the two disputants did not evince any bitterness or enmity towards each other. Five or six days passed in this way in debate, Ubhaya-bharati appearing every day at noon to inform her husband that food was ready and to invite the Sannyasin for his Bhiksha. As they sat firm in their seats, refuting each other's learned arguments, there was not the slightest excitement in their behaviour, nor any angry word in their speech, even when confronted with confounding situations. On the other hand, a sweet smile played on their shining faces all through the debate.

(74-130) Now, finding Mandana capable of taking mighty intellectual punches, Sankara directed an all-out offensive at his thesis, whereupon Mandana found it difficult to maintain his position or give proper answers to the objections raised by his opponent. Thereupon, abandoning the defence of his own thesis, Mandana now launched on an elaborate criticism of the Advaita doctrine expounded by the Upanishads. The objections and replies were in the following strain:

The Identity of Atman-Brahman

[*The following discussion will be better understood by the reader if he bears in mind the fundamental difference the disputants have regarding the Veda, which both Mandana and Sankara accept as the revelation standing for the ultimate good of man. Mandana's school (Purva Mimamsa) holds that the only purpose of the Veda is to prompt man to actions (i.e., rituals of Vedic sanction), by the performance of which man attains heavenly felicity of long duration, at the end of which he returns to the earth—again to acquire more merits by performing Karmas. So the real Veda is of the nature of commandments to action of a ritualistic nature. If there are purely descriptive passages in it, these are purely descriptions of certain aids to Karma like its ingredients, agents required, etc. There may be also many passages which are by way of eulogy of the rituals or their agents. None of these have any independent status and are to be understood only in subordination to the com-*

mandments instituting rituals. Thus, the whole of the Veda is of the nature of commandments for the performance of rituals, and if this is not accepted, Veda becomes a mere trash, a purposeless literature.

Contrary to this view of the Purva-Mimamsakas is the contention of Uttara-Mimamsakas (Vedantins) that the above is only a half-truth and not the full truth; and a half-truth is sometimes worse than a full lie. The Uttara-Mimamsakas contend that the Veda has two sections—the Karma-kanda or ritualstic section and the Jnana-kanda or the philosophic (Knowledge) section. The latter is the crown of the Veda. In Vedic exegesis what the Purva-mimamsakas say is true only of the Karma-kanda and not of the Veda as a whole. The Jnana-kanda of the Vedas, also known as Vedanta or the crown of the Veda, is constituted of the Upanishads which reveal the real or ultimate meaning of the Veda, and the Karma-kanda portions are merely preparatory to this. Therefore, to extend the philosophy of ritualism to the understanding of Upanishads is a great blasphemy. The statements of the Upanishads are not commandments to action, but revelations of the nature of the Ultimate Reality and man's relation to it. They are an end in themselves, and not aids to the performance of any ritual. The understanding conveyed by them releases man from the false sense of duality and establishes him in the experience of the Unity of all existence, thus releasing him for ever from the repetitive process of births and deaths (Samsara) by rousing in him the sense of oneness with Eternal Bliss.

To put it briefly, for Mandana and his school, the Veda is a revelation, teaching and prompting man to efficacious rituals by performance of which perishable felicities can be got, whereas for Sankara it is a philosophy, an understanding of which establishes him in Eternal Bliss, the Unity of all existence.]

MANDANA: O Supreme Sannyasin! You categorically maintain that the Jiva and Brahman are identical in their real nature. I find no valid proof for this.

SANKARA: In the Upanishads, in the teachings of great sages like Uddalaka and others to worthy disciples like Svetaketu, there are passages asserting this unity. For example: *tat tvam asi: abhayam vai Janaka praptosi, tad atmānam eva vedāham brahmā-*

smīti; tasmāt sarvam abhavat; tatra ko mohaḥ kaḥ soka ekatvam-anupasyataḥ, etc.

MANDANA: Statements like *tat tvam asi* convey no special meaning. They are, at the most, meaningless words like *hum phat vashat* etc., which are not meant to convey any sense but only to be used in Japa for eradication of sins. (Mandana is here speaking from the presumption of his philosophy.) Vedic sentences are meant directly or indirectly to prompt men to action. There is no place for mere statements giving information about the nature of anything that is not connected with a Vedic ritual. In the Vedic context, therefore, *hum phat vashat* etc., meaningless in themselves, are significant when used in activities like Japa.

SANKARA: It is true that *hum phat* etc. have no meaning and are, therefore, useful only for Japa. But, when there is actually a meaning conveyed by a word or sentence, as in *tat tvam asi* etc., how can you say that they are meaningless word combinations to be used for Japa only?

Alternative Interpretation of Tat Tvam Asi

MANDANA: Granted they convey some meaning, that meaning cannot be a declaration of unity of Brahman and Atman, although it may apparently look so. All Vedic sentences are injunctions prompting man to actions, and those which are not so apparently, are allied to actions and have to be interpreted that way. For, there are no Vedic sentences purely descriptive of an already existent entity like Brahman having no connection with action. Wherever they are found to occur, they have to be interpreted in the light of the principles stated. *Tat tvam asi* and such other Vedic passages are Vidhi-seshas—they occur after the portions containing injunctions to actions like Yagas and Yajnas, and are, therefore, not injunctions in themselve, but only allied to them in a subsequent sense. Here in the case of *tat tvam asi*, it is only a praise of the performer of a Vedic sacrificial ritual for his highly meritorious deed, calling him Iswara Himself.

SANKARA: Such an interpretation is fanciful. What are called Vidhi-seshas occur only in the earlier, i.e., the Karma-kanda portion of the Vedas, as they are closely connected with Karmas.

They are meant to eulogise the various entities forming parts of the ritual. Examples of this are 'Aditya is Yūpa (sacrificial post)', 'The sacrificer is Prastara', etc. Here, 'Yūpa', 'sacrificer', etc., who form vital parts of a sacrifice, are eulogised through identification, and so these passages occur in proximity with the injunctions regarding sacrifice. But how can *Tat tvam asi* and such passages, coming outside the Karma-kanda and having nothing to do with rituals, become Vidhi-sesha, or appendages to Vidhi (injunction)? Look at such Upanishadic passages of a similar nature: 'The Real alone existed in the beginning', 'Atman alone existed at first', 'Brahman is immutable'. How can any person say that they are all meant for praising the virtues of a sacrificer?

The Question of it being an Instruction for Meditation

MANDANA: If such sentences as *Tat tvam asi* are not meant for praise, they are meant for meditation which would enhance the efficacy of a ritual. When a sacrificer meditates, 'I am That' and superimposes Iswarahood on himself, his power is thereby enhanced, and through that, the fruitfulness, too, of the ritual he performs. Further, Vedas say, "Whatever is done with understanding, faith and determination, their potency is enhanced.' The saying *Tat tvam asi* is parallel to sayings such as, 'Meditate on Aditya as Brahman', 'Meditate on mind as Brahman', etc., when Brahman is superimposed on Aditya, mind, etc., through meditation. In *Tat tvam asi*, Iswarahood is superimposed on the Jiva and, thereby, the power of the Jiva performing sacrifice is enhanced. Interpreting the Upanishads in this way, they can be brought within the scheme of Vedic injunctions and thus made meaningful as a revelation. For, all Vedic passages are connected with action, and no passage unconnected with action (rituals) can have a place in it.

SANKARA: O Learned Sir, in passages like 'Meditate on mind as Brahman', the verb is in the imperative and, therefore, the sentence is a commandment, an inducement to action. But *Tat tvam asi* is a mere statement, the verb being in the simple indicative mood. In the face of this obvious fact, how can you assert that it is an inducement to action?

MANDANA: O Great Yogin! If they are mere descriptions and

not inducements to action, the Vedantic sentences will become a mere jumble of purposeless words in place of being the Sastra (Veda). A Sastra must induce a man to act for something desirable, or to desist from something undesirable. Now the Vedantic passages can be given the force of a Sastra only if they are interpreted as commandments urging man to attain to the fruit of Moksha (Jnana-vidhi), and not by taking them as mere descriptions of a state that serves no human purpose. This is what is done with Vedic passages of a descriptive nature such as: 'Those who perform Rātri-satra are established in the state of greatness.' This, in effect, is only a commandment, meaning: 'If you want to attain to the state of greatness, perform Atirātra.' Just like that, 'That Thou art' means, 'If you want the fruit of Mukti, become Brahman through meditation concerning Brahman and Atman.' Many Vedanta passages are couched exactly in this form as commandments. For example: 'This Atman should be seen, heard, thought of and meditated upon,' 'This Atman which is free from all stain, deserves to be sought after and striven to be known.' Thus the Vedanta passages on non-duality are not mere descriptions but commandments, with the fruit of Mukti in view.

SANKARA: But by such an interpretation, Moksha will become an effect of an action. For. meditation is a mental action, and like any action, it can be done, or not done, or done in a contrary fashion. The implication of making Moksha an effect is to make it impermanent like Swarga and all attainments generated by human activity. This is the very negation of Moksha. In meditation you impose one entity on another by an assertion of the will and generate a new effect which did not exist before. Brahma Vidya (knowledge of Brahma) is not an activity like that of converting Atman, which was not Brahman before, into Brahman by mental assertion. Brahma Vidya is knowledge and not meditation. Knowledge is a mental mode of 'being what one has always been' and not of 'becoming into something that was not before.' The text 'That Thou art' declares the eternal nature of things. Whatever passages look like commandments in the Upanishads as 'This Atman should be heard of, meditated upon, etc.'; are only for removing the obstacles or coverings. Jnana or knoweldge, if you call it an action at all, is only of the nature of removal of

obstacles, and not of bringing about a new condition or effect. When the obstacles are removed, the truth that 'the Atman has always been Brahman,' stands revealed. This is not an effect but what is in the nature of things.

Why not an Assertion of Similarity?

MANDANA: (Now, giving up his thesis that the Vedantic sentences are injunctions for meditation, Mandana adopts a new position and argues:) Let us give up the contention that '*Tat tvam asi*' is an injunction for meditation. What harm is there in understanding it as an assertion of similarity between Brahman and Atman and interperting it as '*You are a spirit similar to Brahman*', and not that you are the same as that?

SANKARA: What is this similarity asserted of? Is it of merely being a spirit, or of having the distinctive features of Brahman as the soul of all, omniscience, omnipotence, etc.? The first of the alternatives is already accepted. The second cannot be, because it goes against the plain meaning of the Vedantic sentence that the Atman and Brahman are one. That they are one cannot mean that they are two similar but different entities.

MANDANA: Let it be maintained that similarity is asserted only of their both being eternally conscious entities, while in respect of qualities like 'being the soul of all' etc., let us say they are there but are covered by Avidya (ignorance) and only look as if they are absent. By accepting this meaning, the basic oneness remains, while for all practical purposes the difference also is asserted. Can't we get over the difficulty suggested by you this way?

SANKARA: If you are prepared to go so far, why do you hesitate to say openly that they are one? For, this is what it amounts to, when you admit that the difference perceived is not real but only apparent, being caused by Avidya.

MANDANA (Changing his position a little): But, don't you think that the doctrine of similarity helps to repudiate materialism? For, by comparison with yourself, it helps you to understand what is meant by speaking of the cause of the world as intelligence. The only self-conscious intelligent entity you understand is yourself,

and the intelligent nature of another entity can be understood only by observing and accepting similarity. And once the cause of the world is accepted as pure intelligence, i.e., that the world has come out of intelligence, then all these quasi-materialistic doctrines like those of Samkhyas and Kanadas are repudiated.

SANKARA: Why follow all these tortuous methods of misinterpreting the Mahavakya, only for securing the refutation of materialism? That is already done directly by passages such as 'That thought, let Me become many' etc. The intelligent nature of the cause of the world is established directly by such passages. Moreover, to get the meaning, you have to distort a statement like 'That thou art (*Tat tvam asi*)' into 'That is like you' (*Tat tvat-sadṛśo'sti, or Tadasti tvamiva*). Where is the justification for all this distortion, if the object is only to secure that intelligence is the source of the world?

Doctrine of Unity Contradicts Perception

MANDANA: (Mandana now takes up an entirely new line of objection and says:) The doctrine of the unity of Brahman and Jiva contradicts the evidence of perception. For, we see only their difference and not unity. So sentences like '*Aham Brahmāsmi*,' '*Tat tvam asi*', *etc.*, which seemingly assert unity, are meant only for Japa (silent repetition) by Yogis. They have not got the force of Vedic sentences.

SANKARA: It has to be established, and not merely presumed, as you do, that perception of the difference between Iswara and Jiva is actually experienced by the eye. Then only is the nonperception of the unity between Iswara and Jiva of any significance, and the situation of identity passages in the Upanishads being contradicted by perception, arises. But actually, perception cannot at all reveal the difference between Iswara and Jiva, because no kind of relation can be established between the organ eye and the kind of difference you speak of. Actual contact of the organ and an object is necessary for perception to function. Here there is no such contact between the eye and this difference.

MANDANA: O learned one! We have actually got a *feeling*

that we are different from Iswara. Leaving aside the question of actual contact, let us take this feeling of difference as an attribute of the Jiva, and interpret it as revealing the difference between the Jiva and Iswara.

SANKARA: Now, to say that an attribute like difference alone is perceived and not the object it qualifies, is an irrelevant and senseless proposition. When you say that the non-existence of a pot on a table is perceived, the table, which the 'non-existence' is supposed to qualify, should also be seen. In this case, the Atman, which is the object supposed to be qualified by difference, is not seen. How can you then contend that 'difference', which is one of its attributes, alone is seen?

MANDANA: Both the Atman and the mind are Dravyas or substances. One substance can contact another substance and rest on it. So your contention that the mind does not and cannot contact the Atman is not correct.

SANKARA: In your way of thought, the Atman must be either Anu (atomic) or Vibhu (all-pervasive). In either case, it is a partless entity. In this world, we find that only entities with parts can have mutual relation. (So if you contend that mind contacts the Atman, you will have to admit that the Atman has parts, which will destroy the very conception of the Atman as a partless and indestructible whole.) All these arguments are vitiated by the presumption that mind is a sense organ which directly contacts objects. But this is not a fact. It is only an aid to the senses for perceiving their respective objects, just as light is. It is not a sense organ.

Does Intuitive Feeling Contradict the Doctrine of Unity?

MANDANA: Let the contention that the sense of difference between the Jiva and Iswara is born of perception, be given up. Let us say that the difference is an inborn intuitive feeling in us (Sakshi). Can't one say that this intuitive feeling contradicts the Vedic sentences propounding the unity of the Jiva and Iswara?

SANKARA: What the intuitive feeling certifies is the difference between the Jiva as qualified by Avidya (ignorance) and Iswara as qualified by Maya (creative power). The unity which the Vedic

sentences certify is the inherent unity realised on the elimination of the above qualifying adjuncts of both. The sphere of intuitive feeling and Vedic sentences here being different, the question of conflict between them does not arise. Besides, even in case a conflict is seen, it is resolved by the law that in two successive experiences or statements, the succeeding one is the stronger one and can abrogate the earlier, according to the doctrine of Apachcheda.

Does Inference contradict Unity?

MANDANA: Then let the evidence of perception in any form be given up. Let us take the position that inference contradicts the doctrine of unity of the Jiva and Iswara. The Jiva is an entity with little knowledge. Iswara is an all-knowing entity. The Jiva is, therefore, different from Iswara, just as a pot is different from Him. This conclusion contradicts Vedic passages declaring the unity of these two.

SANKARA: Say whether the difference between Iswara and the Jiva is actual or merely apparent. If you say it is actual, then the example you have shown to prove it is inappropriate and invalid. The instance shown must be one having knowledge or sentiency in order to have resemblance with the entities involved, namely the Jiva and Iswara. You must show another conscious entity to illustrate your point. The pot is an insentient object. So your argument falls due to insufficiency of illustration.

MANDANA: My view is that self-knowledge does not annul the difference between the Jiva (oneself) and Iswara any more than it eliminates the differerence between oneself and a pot. Self-knowledge means knowledge of oneself only and not of the pot or of Iswara. It need not abolish these differences. Your view, on the other hand, is that it annuls all differences, including that between the Jiva and Iswara. As I hold Iswara, the pot and all other objects on a par in comparison with self-knowledge, my argument is free from the fallacy of inappropriateness of illustration.

SANKARA: Now, the entity you indicate by the word 'self', of which knowledge is predicated—is it unaffected by all dualities like pleasure and pain, or is it the same individuality that is subject to all these? In the latter case, I have no difference with you that

the knowledge of a 'physical self' will not annul differences. But what do you gain by thus establishing a materialistic doctrine that the body is the self. If, on the other hand, the knowledge is of the 'unaffected and unaffectable' spiritual Self, that knowledge effaces Avidya, which is the cause of all differences, including that between the self and the pot. Hence, since all illustrations to show difference can be drawn only from the realm of Avidya, they become inappropriate as illustrations for comparison with that uncontaminated 'spiritual Self.'

MAṆDANA: Now you are not prepared to admit a self that is subject to pleasure and pain, different from Iswara. You say the cause of this sense of difference is Avidya and that when Avidya is removed, all the Upadhis or adjuncts born of Avidya and causing differences, are also eliminated. Now I do not admit such a theory of Avidya. Differences are inherent and not due to adjuncts that can be eliminated. There is inherent difference between Iswara and the Jiva. There is equally inherent difference between Iswara and the pot and between the Jiva and the pot. So, for illustrating the difference between the Jiva and Iswara, the example of the pot and Iswara is quite adequate. So, my example stands.

SANKARA: Your denial of the fact that differences are caused only by Upadhis which have their source solely in Avidya, is not valid. In the case of the pot, though it is not conscious of ignorance like the sentient Jiva, the whole existence of the pot is due to the basic Avidya, and insentiency is its Upadhi. On the other hand, the Jiva being pure sentiency, it cannot be separated from Brahman except by the Upadhi of Avidya. For, all sentiency is Brahman, and the different centres of sentiency in it can be conceived only on the assumption of Upadhis.

MANDANA: I maintain that Brahman, the spiritual Being, has got His own distinctiveness, which cannot be sublated by the Jiva knowing Brahman. You admit that the distinctiveness of a pot is in no way affected when you know it.

God and the Absolute

SANKARA: What is your contention—is it that even when self-knowledge dawns on all the Jivas, Brahman will still continue to

have His distinctiveness? Or is it that the self-knowledge of one Jiva alone, will still leave Brahman in His distinctiveness? If it is the latter, there is nothing at issue except that the fact is not as simple as that. For when the Jiva realises itself as Brahman, all differences in their totality vanish, and in that vanished totality of distinctions is included all the distinctions of individual Jivas and of inert objects like the pot. When Brahman is the sole existence, there is nothing left to show off this distinctiveness. O learned one! What have you in mind when you speak of the knowledge of the spiritual Being—have you in mind God, the Deity, who has attributes like omniscience, omnipotence, immortality, etc., or Nirguna Brahman, which is pure, attributeless, absolute Consciousness? If it is the former, I am in agreement with you in maintaining that difference exists between God and the world of limited beings. If your reference is to the latter, the attributeless Absolute, difficulty arises alike in speaking of knowing Him and not knowing Him. If you say you know Him, it contradicts the Vedas which declare the Absolute to be beyond all means of knowledge. If, on the other hand, you say that He cannot be known, then all attributes and all distinctions lose their basis and must come to naught.

Vedic Passages Teaching Difference: Their Correct Interpretation

MANDANA: (Not being able to show or establish the distinctiveness of Brahman and the Jiva by reasoning, Mandana again resorts to Sruti.) There is the following Upanishadic verse, 'There are two birds of beautiful plumage, unified in friendship through eternity, occupying the same tree. Of them, one eats the fruits of the tree, while the other merely looks on without eating,' Here, the two birds are the Jiva and Brahman, and the Sruti asserts their difference. By this the Sruti contradicts the idea of their unity which, you say, is asserted by other Vedic sentences.

SANKARA: There are many Srutis condemning the perception of diversity as: 'He who sees only diversity here, goes from death to death' etc. As against these, quoting a sentence pertaining to facts known even otherwise, through perception etc., will not weaken the Sruti passages that declare the unity of existence. They only describe the apparent nature, the wrong notions of

things, as seen in ignorance, say, like the silver in nacre. A Vedic sentence must give you some knowledge unattainable through other means like perception, or they must prompt you to some fruitful action. Others are mere Arthavadas, figures of speech and exaggerations, whose meaning is not what they purport to say. The passage you have quoted is only an Arthavada. There are many such passages in the Veda with dualistic import.

MANDANA: A sentence contained in a Smriti (texts attributed to great saints and seers, like the Gita, Puranas, etc.), if it is based on a Vedic text, is considered valid. For example, take the passage 'Kshetrajna is Myself' in the Gita. Even so, a truth given by perception, if it is supported by a Vedic text, has to be given the same validity. The difference between Iswara and the Jiva is given in our intuitive perception, and this is supported by the Vedic text I quoted. Its validity cannot be questioned.

SANKARA: What the Veda supports is not all the Smritis, but the meaning of a Smriti passage which is identical with it. 'Know the Kshetrajna to be Myself' is identical in meaning with '*Tat tvam asi*'. This unique meaning cannot be got through any other means of knowledge except the Vedic passage, and insofar as the Gita passage reiterates this unique meaning, it is relevant in the Vedic context. This is not the case with regard to the sentence you have quoted about 'the two birds, sitting on the self-same tree.' The knowledge of difference between Iswara and the Jiva is had even by the ignorant. No Veda is required for it. Only that is Veda which reveals new knowledge, unattainable otherwise. Its function is not to reiterate knowledge obtained in other ways. Besides, all that has been said by you till now is based on a misunderstanding about the meaning of the passage, 'Two birds of beautiful plumage' etc. When rightly interpreted, it will be seen that the passage is not meant to show the difference between Iswara and the Jiva, but to distinguish Iswara from the Sattva or the Buddhi (intellect). It is the Buddhi that undergoes the enjoyments and sufferings born of Karma, and the passage seeks to distinguish that Buddhi from Iswara and assert His freedom from Samsara.

MANDANA: If, as you say, the reference in this Mantra is to the Buddhi and Iswara, and not to the Jiva and Iswara, then the

passage will be ascribing 'enjoyership' to an inert substance like the Buddhi (for it is only a product of insentient Prakriti), and will thereby become untrustworthy as a means of valid knowledge, because it can be charged with indulging in obvious absurdities like the doctrine mentioned above.

SANKARA: There is no occasion for such a doubt. *Paingya-rahasya Brāhmana* gives its meaning clearly as follows: The Buddhi 'enjoys' while the Jiva (Kshetrajna) witnesses the enjoyment.

MANDANA: In my view this is not correct. In this Brahmana, the Sattva (Buddhi) is equated with the Sāriri (the embodied being). The embodied being is clearly the Jivatma. The 'other' who is spoken of as Kshetrajna (the knower of the field) is Iswara who merely witnesses.

SANKARA: Such a view cannot stand, as the Sruti clearly declares the meaning of the word Sattva to be Buddhi, and of Kshetrajna to be the Jiva. "That by which dream is experienced is the Sattva; He who is the over-seer in the body is the Kshetrajna, i.e., the Jiva."

MANDANA: No; by the words 'by whom' in the text, the Jiva alone is mentioned as the seer of the dream. Kshetrajna is Iswara, the witness.

SANKARA: It cannot be construed so grammatically. As the word 'drashta' is used in the sense of 'Karta' (doer), and as it is preceded by the expression 'the embodied being', the Jiva alone is referred to as the seer. It cannot be Iswara. What is mentioned as two in the Sruti are the Buddhi and the Jiva, and not the Jiva and Iswara.

MANDANA: (Not being able to establish that 'Sattva means Jiva', Mandana tries now to contend that the epithet Sārira or 'the embodied' can be applied to Iswara.) As Iswara is also connected with the bodies of all individuals as the all-pervading indweller, what is wrong in applying the word 'Sārira' or 'embodied being' to Iswara?

SANKARA: Iswara pervades everything—not merely the Sarira or body. Under the circumstances, it is misleading to specify

Him as 'Sāriri' or 'the embodied one'. Akasa is also pervading everything, including this body. Nobody will, on that account, apply the name 'Sāriri' to Akasa.

The Uniqueness of the Vedic Authority on Unity of Existence

MANDANA: (Abandoning the position that the reference is to the Jiva and Iswara, and pointing out the absurdity in maintaining it to be the Buddhi and the Jiva:) A Vedic statement to such an effect would make the Veda support an absurdity (namely, that an inert substance like the Buddhi can be the Bhokta or the enjoyer), and thereby invalidate its status as a means of valid knowledge.

SANKARA: Naturally iron is not hot. But when heat pervades, it, it becomes hot and burning. So also, the inert Buddhi, when pervaded by the Chit, the intelligent principle, can function as the Bhokta or the enjoyer.

MANDANA: In the Kathopanishad, there is the verse: 'Enjoying the fruits of actions, they reside in the cavity of the heart. They are related as light and shade. So say the knowers of Brahman'. In this statement of the Kathopanishad, it is stated that Iswara and the Jiva are residing in the cavity of the heart, and that there is absolute and fundamental difference between them as between light and shade. Is this not contradictory to the doctrine of non-duality?

SANKARA: The Vedic passages that assert the unity of existence are not in any way affected by other passages relating to the divisions and distinctions of relative existence (i.e., life as understood and experienced by man in ignorance). For, what the non-dualistic passages do, is to give a piece of knowledge which cannot be had by any other means, unlike the dualistic passages that teach difference which can be known through other means of knowledge also. So the position of these non-dualistic passages is unique and is quite unaffected by pointing to this passage and that passage teaching difference.

MANDANA: The Vedic passage speaking of difference gets only greater strength and validity from the support it gets from another means of vaild knowledge like Pratyaksha (sense experience). It is not thereby weakened, as you say, because of sense knowledge

confirming it. Therefore these dualistic passages surely affect the validity of non-dualistic passages, which are without the support or confirmation of any other means of knowledge.

SANKARA: O Learned one! The strength of a Vedic passage is not affected, because no other means of knowledge can confirm it: If your contention is conceded, the Veda ceases to be a means of valid knowledge, self-validating in itself. This is the uniqueness of the position of the Veda among the means of right knowledge — namely, that it gives knowledge that cannot be derived through any other means. If your position is accepted, Sruti becomes merely a means for confirming knowledge that can be got through other means also. It becomes very weak and purposeless thereby.

Verdict of Ubhaya-bharati: Defeat of Mandana announced

(131-136) Now, Ubhaya-bharati (who was none but Goddess Saraswati herself) accepted that the cogent arguments of Sankara had overcome the contentions of Mandana, thereby subjecting him to the humility of defeat. Like a shower of sweet-smelling flowers, came her words giving a verdict, which in effect was a directive to her husband to adopt the life of Sannyasa, abandoning home and herself. As she thus gave her verdict in favour of the distinguished Sannyasin, the flower wreath which she had put at the start round her husband's neck was found to fade. And, unlike on ordinary days, she now invited them both, Sankara and Mandana, for their Bhiksha in the noon; for, from now onwards Mandana was no longer a householder but a Sannyasin, according to the wager agreed upon in the beginning. At the same time, addressing Sankara, she said: "It was due to the curse of angry Durvasas that I, Goddess Saraswati, was born on earth. With your victory, the effect of that curse is over. Let me now go back to my heavenly residence." With these words she was making haste to depart, but Sankara stopped her with the power of Vanadurga Mantra, in order that he might defeat her also in argument. This act of his was not so much to get the reputation of an 'all-knowing scholar', but to establish the doctrine on secure foundations by converting all scholars to it. He said to her: "You are the wife of Brahma and the sister of God Siva. It is you who have

assumed the forms of various Goddesses like Lakshmi. You assume, O Mother, different forms for the protection of the worlds. Only when I, your great devotee, permit you, should you go to your heavenly abode." The Devi accepted his request. Sankara then wanted to know what Mandana thought about the future.

CANTO 9

ESTABLISHING THE CLAIM TO BE THE MASTER OF ALL LEARNING

The Correct Interpretation of Jaimini

(1-3) Though the words of the great Sannyasin, expounding the words of the Veda in such a clear and cogent way, put an end to Mandana's desire for controversy, he still had one doubt uncleared owing to his fanatical devotion to the path of Vedic rituals. He said: "O great Sannyasin! Defeat in debate is something new for me. Still it does not depress me. But alas! That the teachings of Jaimini have been refuted, is a matter of great concern for me. Jaimini is one who knew all about the past, present and future. He knows the true purport of the Veda. He also stands for the good of all the worlds. How could he, the greatest among ascetics, then formulate a false body of teachings in his Sutras?"

(4–15) To Mandana who expressed his doubt thus, Sankara said: "The sage has not committed any mistake. The trouble lies in this, that we of little understanding are not able to grasp his ideas correctly." Mandana thereupon requested: "I would like you to expound the meaning of Jaimini's work, which you say even scholars have failed to grasp. If it is convincing, I shall accept it without the least sense of pride of learning or position." Sankara said: "Though himself a person of supreme knowledge, the sage was aware of the fact that the vast majority of people, swimming in the ocean of Samsara, are not capable of striving for that knowledge immediately. So they have to be gradually prepared for it, and for this, as a means of preparatory discipline, he has formulated his teachings in his Sutras. His Sutras are therefore quite meaningful. The Vedas have laid down: 'Following the Vedas, Brahmanas seek Him through Yajna, charity and austerity.' So, in the pursuit of Moksha, Vedic injunctions connected with these have a place. Jaimini has only formulated them in a systematic way. His ultimate goal is Moksha." Mandana then questioned: "True, Vedic passages are those which teach various actions that will lead to generation of certain fruits.

Passages that do not do so are of no significance. Jaimini, who made a Sutra to this effect—how could he be understood to be devoted to an already existing entity like Brahman, which is not the fruit of any action?" Sankara answered: "The Veda is no doubt non-dualistic in its purport. But the attainment of Atman-consciousness can be looked upon as the fruit of certain courses of discipline laid down in the Vedas. In order that men may become devoted to those disciplines, the sage formulated his doctrines supporting actions, so that men may become purified through these and may become fit to understand the teachings on Non-duality." Mandana thereupon argued: "If Jaimini had accepted the Veda as concerned with the description of the already existing Brahman, then how could he accept that Karma in itself could give fruits, and that acceptance of an Iswara or God is superfluous?" Sankara replied: "The followers of Kanada say that, by reasoning, we see that an effect must have had a cause. Through this reasoning we can infer that, the world being of the nature of an effect, it must have had a cause. That cause is God. To arrive at God, this kind of reasoning is sufficient. No Vedic authority is needed. The Vedic sentences on this subject are merely confirmation of what is obtained by reason. Such is the view of Kanada and several others. But the Vedas, on the other hand, declare that Brahman is known through the Upanishads only. How can then the view of Kanada—that even without the Veda, through reasoning alone, God is known—be accepted? Jaimini refuted, by his arguments, a God of this type, obtained through reason alone, as the cause of creation and its destruction. His refutation of such a God is in no way different from our way of thinking. Without understanding this, even scholars have stated that Jaimini is a Nastika (atheist), although, in fact, he is one of the greatest of the knowing ones. But such misunderstanding does not affect his greatness in any way. It is as inconsequential as the owl's misunderstanding of day as night and night as day."

(16–23) This exposition of the true import of Jaimini's teaching by Sankara received thankful approbation from Mandana, his wife and the assembled scholars. Still Mandana, in order to have his doubt cleared completely, thought of the sage Jaimini in his heart. That very moment Jaimini appeared in the sight of them all, and said as follows: "Good-hearted Mandana! You need not have the least doubt about the authenticity of the commentary that

Sankara has produced. What this great Sannyasin said here just now, that indeed is the underlying purport of my Sutras. He has an insight into my true ideas; and so also he had an insight into the meaning of the Vedas and all Sastras. Who else but he deserves to be called a knower of the past, present and future? My teacher was Vyasa; from him I learnt the Vedas, which have got the revelation of Sat-chid-ananda as its purport. How can I, who gathered wisdom at the feet of that Vyasa, compose even a single Sutra that goes against his ideas? So abandon all your doubts, and know this secret: This Sannyasin Sankara is verily Siva embodied as man in order to help ignorant humanity to overcome the bondage of Samsara. First, Kapila gave the spiritual gospel to mankind. In Tretayuga, Dattatreya did the same thing. Next, Vyasa revealed the supreme knowledge. In this age of Kali, it is Sankara that has come to give the saving knowledge to humanity. The Saiva Puranas speak of his glory in such terms. Accepting his doctrines, get across the ocean of Samsara." Enlightening the assembled people in this way, and after embracing Sankara mentally, the great sage disappeared. And Mandana, the greatest among the adherents of the sacrificial cult, now prostrated himself before Sankara, and said as follows:

Mandana in Praise of Sankara

(24-43) I have come to understand that though Thou art of the nature of Pure Consciousness, yet for the sake of ignorant men, Thou hast assumed this human body, just as Thou, the First Cause, abandonest the state of equipoise when it becomes necessary to do so at the start of the creative cycle. On the head of the Upanishads shines as its crest jewel the word Eka (one without a second). See for example such passages as (1) *ātma vā idam ekam agra āsīt* (2) *brahma vā idam agra āsīt ekam eva* (3) *sadeva soumya idam agra āsīt* (4) *ekam eva advitīyam brahma*, and so on. Thou didst protect this crest jewel, the doctrine of the unity of all existence, with '*Tat tvam asi*' for Thy weapon. Had it not been for Thy efforts, this precious crest jewel, the very word '*eka*', would have been shattered to pieces, falling into the deep pit dug by the preachings of the Tathagata (Buddha). A sleeping man sometimes thinks that he is awake, but actually he continues to sleep and see other dreams. Those teachers who claim they are illumined,

but continue to maintain that Moksha consists in residence in some other world after death--they are indulging in the same kind of absurdity as such sleeping men. So, O Great Teacher, the doctrines of these teachers are ridiculed by Thy disciples who had overcome the sleep of Maya. Even in the so-called liberated state of those who support the ultimacy of duality, great sorrow can again occur as in Samsara. But in the liberation Thou preachest, which is without any trace of duality, there is no possibility of any subsequent misery. It is eternal, beyond the world of change, and of the nature of pure Existence-Consciousness-Bliss. Hanumat merely discovered Sita, the consort of Rama, who was none but Parabrahman, in the midst of the Rakshasa women of Lanka; for this he has become so famous. But Thou hast brought out that Brahman Himself, cutting open the abdomen of the Rakshasa woman of Avidya who had swallowed Him. How much more does Thy glory then deserve to be praised! O Merciful one! O Remover of the world's woes! It was without knowing Thy greatness that I spoke all sorts of things to Thee sometime back. Deign to pardon me for it. In determining the meaning of the Vedas, even great sages like Kapila and Kanada laboured under mistaken notions. Except Thou, who art an aspect of Siva, none could know their true meaning. When the nectarine light of wisdom emitted by Thy moonlike face is illumining the understanding of men, the dense darkness of Kapila's, Kanada's and Jaimini's teachings can by no means overcast the minds of men with gloom and impurity that are the natural products of such teachings. When all the country is occupied by the new Yavanas (kings following non-Vedic religion), who delight in breaking the divine image and in slaughtering the bounteous cow of the Vedas, where is the talk of Mukti for those who live as their subjects under the most humiliating conditions? But now, there are springing up here and there men who, following Thy teachings, live untouched by the evils of Kali and devoted to the Supreme Being. Hence my fears are perhaps misplaced. To the Vedas, which had fallen into a fainting fit due to the poison inflicted on them by spurious interpreters, Thou hast given a new lease of life by the shower of nectar that Thy powerful writings have proved to be. Thou hast restored to them their dignified status and enhanced their worth in the eyes of men. O Great

One! But for the cooling moonlight of Thy teachings, mankind would have had but little relief from the burning heat of Samsara. Hurled by Vedic ritualism into the pit of Samsara, I got lost in ritualistic observances and love of home, wife and children; but I have now found in you a saviour who has graciously lifted me up from that pit. It must be as a result of great austerities practised by me in lives past, that I have got this good fortune of association with Thee, who art none but the Supreme Being – His grace incarnated as man. Only in men with a background of great meritorious deeds will the tree of spiritual life take real roots. Control of mind is the sprouting leaf-bud of that tree; control of senses, its tender foliage; contentment, its blossoms; forbearance, its nectar; and faith, its fruit. Thy teachings, which inculcate all these excellences of spiritual life, become available only to men who have great merits to their credit. Fortunate indeed are those who could dip in the waves of mercy surging on the river of Thy gracious looks. It is what gives liberation to men in bondage, as also the fulfilment of their aspirations even to the Devas. Let those who find delight in the embrace of women, waste their time in love sports of their choice, while hypocritically pretending to be men of nobility and learning. It is only those whose boat of life gets wafted on the waves of the unique ocean of Thy teachings that deserve the name of scholars or great men. Thy teachings are like a necklace of splendrous pearls, strung on the golden thread of sound reasoning and scattering the darkness of ignorance by their brilliance. Really wise men delight in wearing this rare necklace. The damsel of Vidya prefers to be the hand-maid of such men than of the Devas. May true scholars be delighted by the study of Thy works and attain reputation thereby! May the pseudo-scholars, blinded by the brilliance of Thy thoughts, withdraw into obscurity like owls in daylight! And may those who dive deep into Thy teachings and practise them in life, become illumined and get steeped in the ocean of undivided Bliss-Consciousness! O Great Acharya Sankara! Service of Thee is the heavenly garden of Nandana; thoughts on Thee and Thy teachings, the wish-yielding Kalpaka tree of heaven; meditation on Thee, the flowering branches of that tree; and hymns in praise of Thee, the heavenly Ganga. Those who resort to Thee thus find in Thee a veritable heaven, and care a straw for the heavenly abode of

Indra. Therefore, here am I resolved to abandon everything precious in life—disciples, home, wife, wealth and the rest—and to take refuge at Thy feet. I am Thy servant, awaiting Thy orders."

Ubhaya-Bharati's Challenge

(44-57) As Mandana finished his hymn of praise, Bhagavan Sankara looked at Ubhaya-bharati, the wife of Mandana. That intelligent lady, having come to understand the mind of Sankara, now said as follows: "O Great Sannyasin! I have understood what you have in mind. In fact, from my very early life I had come to know about my future from the predictions of an ascetic. Now, may you and others in this assembly be pleased to hear it. While I was at home with my mother, an ascetic of imposing personality, wearing matted locks as black as clouds, having sacred ashes smeared all over his body, and holding an ascetic's Yogadanda in his hand, visited our house. My mother received him with all honour due to an august personage. After offering a seat, she requested him, with due respect and humility, to enlighten her on my future. She said: 'I am concerned very much to know something about the future of my daughter. A great ascetic like you can know everything about the past and the future. Out of mercy for their devotees, personages like you are always pleased to reveal to them what is hidden behind the curtain of the future. How long will my daughter live? What sort of a man will she wed? How many children would she have? Will she live a happy life, having plenty of wealth and performing many holy sacrifices?' The sage, after closing his eyes in meditation for a minute, began to disclose many secrets about the past and the future. He said, 'When the path laid down by the Vedas is about to be obliterated by the criticisms of hostile thinkers, Brahma will be born on earth as the scholar Mandana for the resuscitation of the Vedic way of life. Just as Lakshmi became the consort of Vishnu, this daughter of yours will become the consort of Mandana, and will happily live long in the world, blessed with wealth, children and opportunities of performing many Yagas (sacrifices). Then, in order to resuscitate the doctrines of the Vedanta, which constitutes as it were the head of the Vedas, and which will be almost obliterated by the criticisms of powerful hostile thinkers, God Siva Himself will grace this earth in a human form. Now your daughter's

husband will have to meet in debate this Siva-incarnation in the form of a Sannyasin. Defeated in the debate, your daughter's husband will have to renounce the household life and follow his Master as a Sannyasin.' All that the sage predicted has come literally true. How can my husband, therefore, fail to become your disciple, O Great One! But please remember, you have not gained complete success over my renowned husband, as I am his better half. Before you make him your disciple, you have to defeat me also in debate. Though you are the master of all learning and are an embodiment of divinity, I have none the less a desire to debate with you."

(58–72) Hearing these wise and deeply significant words of that learned lady, the wife of the leader of the sacrificial cult in those times, Sankara, the great Sannyasin, said, "You say that you want to enter into a wordy controversy with me. But then, you are a woman. It is not proper to fight with women, be it with words only." To this Ubhaya-bharati replied, "What difference does it make whether a controversialist, who challenges you and attacks your doctrines, is a man or a woman? The duty of a controversialist is to defeat his opponent whoever it might be. Look at the ancient examples of Yajnavalkya debating with Gargi and of Janaka with Sulabha. The reputation of those sages was in no way affected adversely by entering into controversy with women." Hearing her very persuasive words, Sankara, the learned Vedic scholar, was very much pleased, and decided upon entering into a debate with that wise woman. A very closely argued debate between them followed, filling the minds of all assembled scholars with wonder at the tremendous flow of learning coming from both the contestants. In point of sound reasoning and beauty of expression, the performance of both of them excelled the skill and the learning of even Adisesha, Brihaspati and other great sages. For seventeen days this protracted debate continued day and night, the only break being for the performance of each one's daily duties. Ubhaya-bharati found that the Sannyasin was invincible in Vedic lore, philosophies and other Sastras. Then a new idea struck her. She thought: 'This great Sanṅyasin took to ascetic life from his very boyhood, and has been observing the vow of continence throughout life. Surely, he had no occasion to live with women and master the science of love between the

sexes. I shall now take advantage of his ignorance in this respect and try to gain victory over him.' Resolving thus in mind, she challenged the Sannyasin this wise: "Discuss with me the science and the art of love between the sexes (*Kusumāstra-sāstram*). Enumerate its forms and expressions. What is its nature and what are its centres? How does it vary in the sexes during the bright and dark fortnights? What are its manifestations in man and woman?" At this, Sankara sat silent for a while, revolving the various issues in his mind. He was on the horns of a dilemma; if he did not take up the challenge, his claim to be the master of all learning would be compromised. If he directly entered into a discussion on the subject, it would go against the Dharma of a Sannyasin, as he is not expected to concern himself with the love of the sexes. Though he had some theoretical knowledge of this topic also, he professed ignorance in order to observe the Sannyasin's code of conduct, and said: "Give me a month's time. It is a practice among controversialists to ask for notice. After an interval of a month, I shall meet you again, and then you will give up your pride of proficiency in the science of sex-love, too."[1]

The Propriety of acquiring Knowledge of Sex-love discussed

(73–78) On her agreeing to this proposal, Sankara, along with his disciples, left the place. By his Yogic power, he and his disciples were travelling through air, when they came across the dead body of a king who in majesty looked like another Indra, the king of the Devas. His body was surrounded by ladies in tears and by ministers and officers with faces sorrow-stricken and downcast. The king had gone ahunting to the forest the previous

[1] The character of Ubhaya-bharati, known also as Sarasavani in other Sankara-vijayas, is a very intriguing one. To have challenged a mighty personage like Sankara for debate, to have held him at bay for several days, to have discovered the only vulnerable point in him to be his ignorance of Kama-sastra (the science of sex-love) because of his having become a Sannyasin from boyhood, and to have questioned him on this topic in that assembly of learned men-bespeak as highly of her learning as of her intelligence and daring. According to the historians of India's social development, by the post-Upanishadic period, the higher education of women had come to be discouraged and gradually discarded. Evidence of this is reflected even in Sankara's own writings. In his commentary on *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (6.17), where Sankara comments on a passage inculcating a ritual to be performed by

night, and in the course of the hunt happened to fall unconscious under a tree and die on the spot. Seeing the dead body of this king, Sankara said to his disciple Padmapada (also known as Sanandana): "Here lies dead the renowned king Amaruka, having more than a hundred wives of exquisite beauty. I am thinking why I should not enter into the body of this king and revive it by Yogic power, and thus live in his palace amidst these women through his body in order to gain knowledge of sex-love and achieve the status of an all-knowing person. I shall thus have an opportunity to make a direct study, as a witness, of the manifestation of love in women and their behaviour under its influence."

(79–88) In reply to this proposal of the great Sannyasin, Padmapada gave his cautious reply as follows: "There is nothing unknown to an omniscient personage like you. Yet, I shall speak a few words out of my love for, and devotion to, you. It seems, in days of yore, a great Yogi named Matsyendra, entrusting his own body to his disciple Goraksha, entered into the body of a dead king and thereby got access into his palace. While the Yogi thus reigned as the king, prosperity attended that kingdom. Timely rain brought bounteous harvests. Observing all this, it occurred to his ministers that some great soul must have entered into the dead body of the king. So they advised his consorts to use all their amorous skill to keep the king completely absorbed in love sports, so that he might not leave the body. The king got so immersed in the emotional display of these women, their amorous advances, soft laughter, sweet songs and lovely dances—that he forgot everything about Samadhi and spiritual matters, and behaved exactly like a sensuous man. Coming to know of the change that had come over his teacher,

---

one who wishes to have a learned (*Pandita*) daughter, he remarks that *Pandita* here cannot mean 'learned' in the ordinary sense of the term, because Vedic study is denied to women; it must, therefore, be interpreted as 'skilled in household management'. The mythical technique of the authors of Sankara-vijayas overcomes the incongruity they saw in the character of Ubhaya-bharati by recognising her as an incarnation of Saraswati, the Goddess of learning. Even without going for such a theological explanation, we can understand the situation by accepting that the views on women's position and education recorded in Smritis, which form the authority for historians to base their conclusions, did not have uniform application for a vast country like India. In different parts of the country different conditions might have prevailed, and the Smritis reflect only local situations, or the view of individual thinkers on social matters.

the disciple Goraksha, after duly preserving his teacher's body in a secure place, came disguised as a dance instructor and got access to the inner apartment as a dancing instructor for women. He attracted the king's attention, and by instructing him about spiritual truth, he destroyed the king's thirst for sense enjoyments. By regaining his power of Yoga, Matsyendra was able to leave the king's body and re-enter his own. From this it is seen how strong and irresistible sense attraction is. Besides, to abandon the vow of Brahmacharya is sinful, too. All these of course are matters too well-known to you. How great and how unparalleled in excellence are our holy vows, and how ignoble and wretched is sexuality? If a personage of your type goes after the latter, the whole world will get degraded by following your example. The Dharma of Sannyasins is already at a low ebb, and it has been your life-work to re-interpret and restore it to its pristine purity. All these are matters very well known to you. It is only love of you that prompts me to speak in this vein."

(89–100) After Padmapada finished, Sankara who excelled Brihaspati himself in learning, spoke thus: "What you have said is only a partial appraisal of the situation. Now, hear the whole truth about it. In one who is absolutely non-attached, desire for sense enjoyment will not arise. This was the case with Sri Krishna when he lived with the Gopis. The continence of one who knows the Yogic practice of Vajroli will remain unbroken. Sankalpa, the brooding imaginative association, is the cause of desires. I am without that failing, even like Maha-Vishnu. One who is without any Sankalpa may live in Samsara without being affected by it; for the real root of Samsara has already been destroyed. The commandments and prohibitions of scriptures are applicable to men in ignorance who live with the deep-rooted conviction that their body is their self. In the case of one who has realised even here that the Self, which is called 'he', is without all contacts and is the relationless and eternally pure spirit—of one who is established in this supreme teaching of the Vedanta—the commandments and prohibitions of Sastras have no application. There is only clay in all pots that are made of clay. Similar is the case with all objects born of Paramatman. He and the world supposed to be born of Him are not different, the world having no existence apart from Him. How can one who realises the whole

world as a mere appearance, be affected by anything? If a person performs Yagas and Yajnas in dream, will he derive any benefit from it? All fruits are non-existent for one who has realised the world as a mere appearance. Let a hundred Yagas be performed, or let hundreds of men be killed. Neither the good nor the bad effects of such actions will affect a knowing one in the least, as he has no sense of agency with regard to all actions flowing through his instrumentality. The Upanishads say that not a hair of Indra was affected, though he killed Trisiras, the son of Twashta, and offered the bodies of ascetics as food for wolves. The Vedas also say that though king Janaka performed many Yajnas and charities, he did not get further embodiment to enjoy the fruits of these; for, by virtue of his knowledge he was absorbed in the Bliss of Paramatman for ever. A true knower will thus be free from all sinful effects, like Indra, and from enjoyable fruits like Janaka. For, he is free from any sense of good and evil. So, even if I indulge in the enjoyment of sex-love with this body, no evil will result from it. However, in order that the world may not be misled in respect of virtuous conduct by observing my example of a Sannyasin indulging in the practice of sex-love, my proposal is to gain the experiences of sex-life through the body of another person whose dead body I am going to enliven by temporarily identifying myself with that body."

Sankara Entering the Body of the Dead King

(101–109) After announcing his resolution through these words of wisdom, Sankara ascended by Yogic power to the top of a steep mountain peak which no man would ordinarily climb, and said to his disciples: "Here is a secure cave, and round about you get a rocky and level plateau. Nearby is a lake of crystalline waters surrounded by trees burdened with luscious fruits. So long as I reside in another suitable body for the study of sex-love through experience, you must carefully preserve in this cave the lifeless body of mine that will be left with you." So saying, the great one left his gross body lifeless in the cave, and shifted his own subtle body into the gross body of the dead king. Releasing his Prana functioning in the body from foot to head and conveying it out through the Brahmarandra in the head, the Acharya, who was a master of Yoga, came out of his own body and entered

into that of the dead king through the Brahmarandhra in the head of that body and permeated the whole of it up to the toe. At once the heart of the dead king began to beat; his eyes opened; and, before long, he sat up. First his face brightened; then he began to breathe in the natural way; next he began to move his limbs; and finally he opened his eyes and stood up when he gained his full strength. Seeing their husband, the king, revive, his wives surrounding the body, greeted him with joyous cries and brightened faces, just as the sun is greeted at dawn by a lake with the faces of innumerable lotus buds in bloom and the joyous cries of water birds residing in it. In surprise, the ministers now found the women of the royal household in great joy, with the king standing in their midst. Great was their excitement on getting back their master. They ordered the sounding of trumpets, conchs and other musical instruments so as to celebrate the joy of the whole community, and the deafening sounds of the instruments reverberated from heaven and earth alike.

CANTO 10

ACQUIREMENT OF KNOWLEDGE OF SEX-LOVE[1]

(1-10) Next various propitiatory and auspicious rites were performed by priests for the king's welfare. Then accompanied by his friends and the ministers, the king went in procession on an elephant's back to his city. After pacifying his sorrow-stricken subjects, the king, along with his ministers, ruled the kingdom like Indra over the heavens, receiving the tribute and respect of all feudatory rulers. While the great Sankara began to rule the kingdom through the body of Amaruka, his astute ministers began to feel some doubts about the identity of their master and spoke thus among themselves: "It is by the rare good fortune of the people of this land that the king has come back to life from the jaws of death. But he now looks a changed man. Unlike in earlier days, we find all divine virtues manifest in him. He is now like a Yayati to people who approach him for favours; in power of speech he is like the Guru of the Devas; to opposing kings he is like the great hero Arjuna; and in learning he is like Siva Himself. We find in him an abundant manifestation of rare qualities—he is unyielding in valour, unperturbed in adversity and unparalleled in liberality. Surely he looks a fragment of Divinity itself. In orchards and wooded groves, trees are bearing flowers and fruits in all seasons. Cows and buffaloes are yielding plentiful milk. Timely rain has resulted in bumper crops. And all people are adhering to the proper discharge of their allotted duties. Though the age of Kali in which we live is an evil age, in this land our king seems to have inaugurated a virtuous age excelling the age of Treta itself. It looks, therefore, that some divine personage has

[1] There are many who object to the subject matter of this chapter, because it depicts Sankaracharya in the midst of women. But they forget that it is king Amaruka and not Sankara who is actually involved in it. Reference may be made to the reply given by Sankara himself on this subject in chapter 16, dealing with his ascension of the Throne of Omniscience. As the subject matter has been dealt with by a great sage like Vidyaranya, we have given almost a full translation. No one can vouch for the historicity of these events. It may even be taken as an *Arthavada* (an eulogy) to convey powerfully the idea of the absolute unaffectedness of a Knowing One like Sankara.

entered into the body of our king, and it is due to his power that all these changes in this country have taken place." So they concerted certain measures that would prevent that great personage from leaving the king's body and returning to his own. They gave secret orders to their subordinates that wherever any human dead body was to be found, no matter whose it was, they should seize it and burn it immediately.

(11-18) After a time the king entrusted the administration of the kingdom to a cabinet of ministers and confined himself to the inner apartments to spend his time in the company of his handsome women, the like of whom could not be found in the palace of any other king. In clean and cool crystalline halls he engaged himself continuously in all forms of amorous indulgences with these charming and responsive women—in playing at dice with them offering various forms of sexual indulgences as wager; in drinking wine in golden cups from their hands and making them drink the same; in impressing kisses on their faces having half-closed eyes, emitting fragrant breaths and speaking honeyed words; and in holding their bare bodies in tight embrace forgetting everything else in the thrill of concentrated joy. Serving well the bodies of these women—their bosoms, his teachers in the study of sex-love—he, standing as a witness in the king's body, observed closely all the centres and expressions of amorous gratification. By his life in their company, he understood the nature of the joy that sex love gives; but, for him, (Sankara who had enlivened the king's body) it was only a shadow, a perversion, of that Brahmic Bliss in which his mind was ever immersed. To others it looked that the king, as in olden days, was enjoying the company of women; but what he was really doing was to observe and study the principles of sex-love in a practical way with the help of experts in it. Besides, he studied during this time the Sutras that the sage Vatsyayana had made on this subject together with all the commentaries on the same, and also produced a new work of great profundity on the theme, bearing the name of Amaruka.

Disciples' Reflections

(19-23) While Sankara, the great Sannyasin, was thus gathering these experiences through the king's body, his disciples who were guarding his lifeless body began to murmur about their

apprehensions among themselves, seeing that the appointed time for their Master's return had already passed. They said: "He had said that he would be away for a month. It is now five or six days past that period. Is it that the Acharya is not gracious enough to give us his guidance and protection even after this long period? What are we to do now? Where shall we search for him? To whom shall we communicate this news? Even if we search over the land up to the limits of the sea, how can a person who has entered into some other body in some unknown place be found out? If our merciful teacher is to desert us, why should we live any longer? We have abandoned hearth and home depending on him as our saviour. His holy personage dispels the massive sins of all, roots out man's infatuation for sense enjoyments, and establishes him in spiritual bliss. May our heart's allegiance be ever for him, whom the animal nature in man can never contaminate!"

(24-29) Then they began to give expression to their deep sorrow individually. One disciple said: "Our teacher is like a tree of virtues bearing numerous excellences as fruits; he is an assemblage of all the glories revealed in the Vedas; he is an embodiment of metaphysical insight; he is the repository of all Yogic powers; his wealth is his knowledge of the Self and his inseparable wife, supreme Peace. When will he, who has attained oneness with all beings, again bless us by his presence?" Another disciple said: "May I for ever get shelter at the feet of that great Sannyasin who has put down the pride and audacity of evil men and also extinguished the fire of mundane sufferings for pious men." Still another disciple said: "May I cross the sorrows of life by meeting again that holy personage, by resorting to whom even the dullest of men can get over the infatuation of Maya." A fourth disciple said: "He bestowed on me the non-dualistic consciousness, dispelling the darkness cast by the beginningless Avidya (ignorance), and imparted to me that power of discrimination to distinguish the true from the untrue and the good from the bad. When will he come again to clear the confusion caused by the false arguments of sophistical thinkers?" A fifth disciple said: "You on whom the state of Nirvana is an attendant even in your embodied state, you whose stirring words have always dispelled and dissipated the evil tendencies of those who have taken refuge at your feet—if

you, O my teacher, do not make your appearance immediately, I shall have to stand the ridicule of all good men who will be traducing you. Save me from that unbearable predicament!"

(30-35) Then Padmapada (alias Sanandana), who knew full well the greatness of the teacher, spoke the following meaningful words for restoring courage into the hearts of his sorrow-stricken co-disciples: "Friends! Enough of weeping and wailing. We shall now search for him everywhere, be it on earth, in the netherworld or in the heavens, just as we search for the Supreme Being hidden in men, gods and other beings. If one works hard, even very difficult things can be achieved. In ancient times, the Devas procured Amrita (ambrosia) overcoming, through assiduousness, the apparently insurmountable difficulties that faced them. It is, indeed, very difficult to identify one who has entered into another's body. Still, there is a way for this, too. You can find him out by his excellences which will surely be expressed through his assumed body, just as the moon, even when swallowed by Rahu, reveals his presence through Rahu's body. In order to master the science of sex-love, that great one of fiery splendour, of absolute self-control and of pristine purity untouched by sexuality, has entered into the body of a king for the sake of facilities for association with the fair sex.

"Wherever a personage of that type, fully satisfied in the Self, goes, there the people, too, become happy and peaceful; ailments and miseries cease to afflict them; theft, duplicity and exploitation disappear from the land, performance of Swadharma becomes natural to man; and the land is blessed with a plentiful harvest due to timely rain. Therefore, without spending more time in vain talk, let us go out in search of our great teacher whose feet are the resort of people who want to cross the ocean of Samsara."

Disciples Entering the Palace as Musicians

(36-44) All the disciples heard the words of Padmapada with great respect and attention. Quickly they decided that a few should remain on the spot to guard the holy body, while the rest should start out in search of the great teacher. After crossing many mountains and traversing through many countries, they reached at last the kindgom of Amaruka, which appeared to them to be a heaven on earth because of its prosperity and the joyous life

of its people. They heard from the people of the place that their king was considered dead, but that in a very mysterious way his supposedly dead body revived and that, since then, he has been ruling the country with the wisdom of a Prithu or a Dilipa. On hearing this, they came to the conviction that it must be their teacher who was working through the body of the king. Hope returned to their hearts, and they now felt emboldened to pursue their task. They heard that the king was a great lover of music and the company of women. So they assumed the role of musicians and gained access to the palace, where they were invited to give a musical performance, as the palace authorities were convinced that they were experts in that fine art. There, in the music hall of the palace, they saw their teacher surrounded by a bevy of beauties like the moon thronged by the stars. Behind him were handsome women waving the royal chowry with their creeper-like hands to the accompaniment of the sweet sounds produced by their jingling bracelets, and in front were other ladies, experts in music, filling the whole hall with the melodious tunes of their musical instruments. There were still others holding the royal umbrella with a golden handle over his head covered with a gem-studded crown. Though majestic like the king of the gods, he looked in the present setting like the very embodiment of Kamadeva, the god of love. On their entering the music hall, the king showed them their place with a movement of his eyes, and on being ordered by him, they began to sing a song in their melodious voice, closely observing all the rules of the science of music.

(45-55) The burden of the song was this: "O Honeysucker! We, your companion bees, guarding your body on the wooded top of a mountain peak, have long been most anxiously awaiting your return. It seems our anxiety is now at an end. In order to study the science of sex-love, you have been living here, abandoning your own body. O holy one! Taking shelter at your feet and in the hope of having your holy company perpetually, we have followed you, abandoning all other forms of Sadhana, even the worship of Siva at Varanasi. Alas! We have been deceived. O one with moon-like face! How is it that by identification with your present situation, you have continued to stay on here, forgetting all your antecedents? O victor over passions! May you be pleased to be reminded of your higher nature through these words of ours!

Rejecting with the help of Vedic dicta like 'Not this', 'Not this', all the manifest and unmanifest phenomena as unreal, the wise ones arrive at that irreducible Self-nature which cannot be subjected to any further negation. You are that unsublatable Truth. Projecting the limitless universe constituted of the five elements, the Supreme Being resides in it as the Indwelling Spirit. Just as one obtains the grain of rice by discarding the enfolding husk, the wise sages, seeking Him, reject through analysis, the five sheaths of Annamaya, Pranamaya, Vijnanamaya, etc. and arrive at the indwelling Supreme Spirit. You are that Spirit. The senses are like wild horses running uncontrolled along dangerous paths. The wise ones try to bring them under control with the whip of insight into the evil consequences of sense enjoyments and with the reins of discriminative thought. They tie them to the all-controlling Self, the truth declared by the saying 'Thou art That' within. Just as one carefully separates the thin and delicate thread of the lotus stalk from its enfolding fibre, so do the wise ones discriminate and separate the Fourth, the Turiya, from the three states of waking, dream and sleep. And 'Thou art That' Truth, the Turiya. The Vedas declare, 'All this is the Atman' with a view to show that all this effect-world has no existence apart from their cause, the Atman. Just as the golden bracelets, head ornaments, etc., are forms of gold, so, too is the Atman, the Supreme Spirit, the material cause of everything. Apart from Him, the Supreme Cause, nothing exists, and 'Thou art That' Supreme Cause. That which shines in this body, that is in the sun; and that which is in the sun, that is within this body too—the knowers of the Veda try in this way to establish the Truth of the unitary Atman, and verily 'Thou art That' Atman. The wise ones seek to know the Truth, according to the instructions of the Veda, with intense faith and yearning and with purity attained through the performance of Yajnas, charities, austerities and self-control, and verily 'Thou art That' Truth. Seeking which in themselves, spiritual aspirants resort to various disciplines like the practice of the pacification of mind, and attaining which they rise above sorrow and infatuation,—verily 'Thou art That' Truth, the Sat-Chit-Ananda."

(56-60) Hearing this sublime hymn, the king came to the realisation of his duty. Pleased with them, he first dismissed them with rich presents. Having come to a full consciousness of his

identity, he withdrew his subtle body from the body of the king, which immediately fell down dead as before in the assembly. He entered into his own body, lying in the place where he had left it, through the Brahmarandhra as described before, and permeated and enlivened it. But a strange development had, however, just taken place. The king's emissaries, who had been commissioned to find out all lifeless bodies and burn them, reached the cave where the Acharya's body was preserved while the disciples on guard were away for their ablutions. They had taken possession of the body, put it on a pyre and just set fire to it, when the Acharya enlivened it. In order to have the fire extinguished, the Acharya recited extempore a great hymn, addressed to Lakshmi-Nrisimha. By the grace of Nrisimha the fire subsided, and he emerged from the cave as the moon comes out of Rahu's mouth at the end of an eclipse.

(61-72) Sanandana and other disciples immediately surrounded him with an intensity of joy and affection enhanced by this long period of separation from him. The Acharya, who was like Sanaka himself in his spiritual majesty, was now anxious to go to Mandana's home for finalising the debate. He, therefore, travelled through air to that house, where he found Mandana, now free from that sense of attachment, inordinate pride and self-consciousness, which were born of his former adherence to ritualistic philosophy. As Sankara descended from the skies, Mandana received him with all honour and cordiality, and stood before him with hands in salutation and eyes unwinking, awaiting his command. Mandana, noble-minded and always devoted to the truth, prostrated before him, and holding his feet with his hands, said: "O Master! My house, my body, and everything that is mine, I abandon in your favour." To the sage, who was thus honoured by Mandana and to whom was offered a throne-like seat in the midst of scholars, Ubhaya-bharati, the wife of Mandana, spoke thus: "O great one! You are that Sadasiva, who is the lord of Brahma and of all the Devas and other beings, as also the master of all learning. O Destroyer of Cupid! That you did not defeat me in debate immediately and that you took all the trouble to master the science of sex-love, were meant only to conform to the ways of the world. That we have met with defeat at your hands is no matter of shame. Great One! What disrepute can accrue

to the soft-rayed moon and the stars if their light is suppressed by the fierce brightness of the sun? I have finished my mission, and I am going to my heavenly abode. Give me permission." And, as Ubhaya-bharati, who was none but Saraswati, was about to disappear from sight, Sankara said to her, "I know that you are Saraswati, the consort of Brahma and the sister of Siva. It is you, who are of the nature of pure consciousness, that has become Lakshmi for the protection of the worlds. I shall, in future, be instituting temples of worship for you in Risyasringa (Sringeri) and other places. I beseech you, Devi Saraswati, to manifest yourself in all those temples, receiving the adoration of devotees and bestowing boons on them." Agreeing to do so, she disappeared from sight, merging herself in Brahmaloka, while all the people in the assembly hall looked on wondering.

(73-76) Every one was till now thinking that Mandana, who was defeated in argument, would now become a Sannyasin, and his wife would, therefore, be reduced to widowhood. But Mandana, the Acharya, and all the others felt much relieved, as this unpleasant situation would not arise on account of Ubhaya-bharati's ascension to Brahmaloka. Now Mandana, in pursuance of Vedic injunctions, performed the sacrifice called Prajapatya, offered all his wealth to holy men as presents, mentally installed within himself his Agnihotra fire, and became a follower of the Sannyasin, with all worldly desires and ambitions extinguished. After the great scholar Mandana had performed all the rites for entering into the Order of Sannyasa, Sankara imparted to him the great Vedic sentence '*Tat tvaṃ asi*' (Thou art that) for the removal of all his miseries pertaining to transmigratory existence (Samsara). After Mandana had assumed the insignias of Sannyasa, and had ceremonially collected Bhiksha (food gathered as holy offerings from house to house by Sannyasins), the great Bhagavan began to expound to him the truths revealed in the Upanishads, which form the crown of the Vedas.

Instruction on Brahman-Knowledge

(77-102) Sankara instructed him thus: "The real 'you' are not the body. For, the body is just an object to you like a pot. To both body and pot, you refer as 'mine' (i.e., as 'my body', 'my pot', etc.). Besides, you speak of the form of the body, its belonging

to the human species, etc. Considered thus, it is as much an object as a pot. Yet due to superimposition, I, the subject, gets identified with the body, an object. Just like a pot, the body, too, can be destroyed with another object like itself. In being a mere object, the body stands on a par with all these things of this objective world. Being an object, the body must be something different from 'yourself'. How can it then be identified with the self, the subject? Nor are you the senses; for, the senses are only instruments of the self, just as a sickle is of a farmer, and so we speak of them as 'my' eye etc. In deep sleep the senses are laid aside like any instruments, but the 'I' persists. So they, too, are objects like a pot. It may be said that the Self is a collection of all the senses. In that case, the destruction of any of the senses should cause the destruction of the Self, which does not happen. If you say that each one of the Indriyas is the Self, then the body, having many masters, cannot function properly and must, therefore, perish. The Atman cannot also be another additional sense similar to the five senses. For, who will then be there to feel the loss of any of the senses *as his loss*? If the eye is lost, the sense of touch does not feel any loss. Only something behind all the senses and common to all of them, can feel the loss of any of them as his. And that is the Atman, distinct from all the individual senses. Even the mind is not the Atman, because it is only an instrument. For, do we not feel that the mind is absorbed at different times in things that are distinct from us? Besides, in deep sleep we experience the entire disappearance of the mind, while the witness remains. Thus the principle of Consciousness is different from the mind. For the same reason Buddhi (intellect) can also be distinguished and rejected as an instrument of Consciousness. Like the mind, it, too, is found to function in respect of other objects, and in deep sleep it is fully laid at rest. It, too, is, therefore, to be considered merely as an instrument with which Consciousness functions. The Atman is not even Ahamkara, the I-sense. That word itself indicates the Aham or 'I' to be a Karana or an instrument in the hands of some one higher than it. Again, in deep sleep even the I-sense is not there. Now, the Pranas are present even in deep sleep, in which all other powers and entities subside. Why should not Prana be taken as the Self? It cannot be, because we speak of 'my Prana'. It must, therefore, be different from the Self. In the sentence '*Tat*

tvam asi', the entity indicated by the word '*tvam*' or 'you' indicates the Atman or the spirit in the individual, whereas the entity indicated by '*Tat*' or 'that' is the cause of the world, Brahman. The sentence signifies the oneness of the entity, to which both the words '*Tvam*' and '*Tat*' point. Then, is it that this sentence equates an ignorant fool with the Omniscient Being? It is absurd to say that darkness and light are the same. Such a statement contradicts all experience. Well, the absurdity in this is only as in the sentence, *Saḥ ayam pumān*, 'He is that man'. There is really no absurdity here, because there is an identity in the person indicated by the two words in the sentence, 'he' and 'man'. Similarly, the word '*tvam*' or 'you' is to be taken as referring not to the direct word meaning but to the indirect implied meaning of it, namely, the Spirit behind the directly perceived imperfect individual personality, and '*Tat*', the 'That', to the Spirit forming the substratum of the mighty universe. The identity asserted is, thus, of the spiritual Essence of both and not of the ignorance of the individual and of the might of the Universal. What harm is there then, in understanding this identity in the indirect sense? The sense that 'I am the body' has been acquired and strengthened by indulgence in self-centred work during an infinite past. Abandoning this idea by discriminative intelligence, remain steady in non-duall consciousness and be liberated thereby. Give up this cause of all suffering—the sense of 'myness' with regard to this body, which is sure to be consumed by either fire, or insects, or birds, or animals. Give up all thoughts about external objects, and unite your mind in unbreakable union with the Supreme Being. Just as a great fish (*maha-matsya*) moves from one shore of a lake to another and appears at the different shores, so also the Atman manifests in the three states of waking, dream and sleep. Though associated with these states, the Atman is separate from the states and their happenings, just like that fish. The feeling that you have of identification with the states of waking, dream and sleep is created by the Buddhi superimposing these states on you, who are of the nature of Pure Consciousness. On reflection it is discovered to be like superimposition of a snake or a stick or a crevice on a rope. In reality you are the Brahman Supreme, the fearless. Cast away all infatuation born of misconception. For the wise man, the supreme state of perfection is the nearest of the near. But the

ignorant one searches for it outside, conceiving it to be obtainable in far-off regions, although in truth it is all-pervading and closest to him in being identical with his own nature. Such is the wonderful mystery of Maya. People coming together as members of a family, is only just like many travellers living together for a while in a caravanserai. For a short time they are together, considering themselves bound to one another in intimate relationship, but before long everyone goes his own way. Whatever man does day and night for securing happiness turns out in the end to be a cause of misery. In a mind that has reached the perfection of purity, this truth dawns on the very first hearing of the Vedic sentences relating to it. But in those in whom ignorance is thick, it dawns only gradually through a series of preparatory disciplines like the service of the teacher, meditation on the Pranava, and the performance of duties laid down for the Sannyasin. These will remove the impurities of the mind, and then will take place the awakening into the consciousness of Non-duality. The teacher is verily Siva. Obey his instruction day and night. If he is pleased with the disciple, he will bestow his grace on him. Respect the instructions of the teacher. It is capable of bestowing all excellences on you. It is the one cause of joy. Even if the Deity whom you adore is angry with you, the teacher can save you, but if the teacher is angry, there is none who can. So, do not displease the teacher in the least. Man seeks the supreme ends of life – Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha. He is to seek this, avoiding the forbidden acts and observing the commandments. It is the Guru who gives these prohibitions and commandments, and it is he who removes the evil and bestows the good. Through adoration, God bestows blessings on the votary. It is the teacher who enlightens one as to how this adoration is to be done. Otherwise, how can man come to know the Deity who transcends the senses? If the teacher is pleased, all the deities are pleased. So also, if he is displeased, all deities are displeased. For, the true teacher is one who identifies himself with all the deities. He ensouls everything."

Sankara travels on his Spiritual Mission

(103-107) Having thus received instruction on the nature of the Atman, the disciple prostrated himself before Sankara and said, "O great teacher! By your grace, ignorance has been dis-

pelled, and I have become blessed." Mandana was given the name of Sureswara—a name that came to be favoured by the guardian Dames of the Quarters and was to be known far and wide in times to come. Attaining to the position of the chief disciple of Sankara, he remained in a state of blessedness that was superior even to that of Brahma, the creator. Immersed in the study of, and reflection on, Vedanta, and thereby poised ever in the blessed Self, Sureswara, noted among the egoless saints, lived many days on the banks of the Narmada. Sankara, the most gracious of all teachers, having thus brought the celebrated Mandana into his own fold, started again on his mission of eradication of false doctrines, and went southwards, witnessing the beauty of dense forests full of trees in blossom and resonant with the hum of honey-seeking bees.

(108-119) He passed through the Maharashtra country, where he propagated his doctrines and controverted false creeds and cults until, stage by stage, he reached the great place of pilgrimage, Srisaila. That wooded place, so dear to Siva, was pleasant with the breeze blowing through the thick growth of trees and bearing the fragrance of jasmine flowers that grew on the creepers winding round the branches of those trees. It was also full of huge lions that battled with elephants and smashed their foreheads. Near Srisaila was a holy river whose bosom was always tossed into high waves. The Acharya went to that river and took his bath in its holy waters. Srisaila had high peaks that kissed the skies. Birds were flying aloft about its breast while the holy river was washing its feet. Sankara now ascended this mountain and saw the great Sivalinga installed on it. He worshipped that image of Siva called Mallikarjuna-linga along with that of Bhramarāmbika, His divine consort. This holy place was the spot where Arjuna, the Pandava, did penance to propitiate Siva and was blessed by Him after He had humbled his (Arjuna's) pride. Sankara stayed for a time on the banks of the holy river, enjoying its crystalline waters and the cool shade of the flowering trees standing on its banks. During his sojourn there, he expounded his commentaries, noted for their delightful style and their profound ideas leading to the salvation of man, to scholars who were eager to learn the same from him. While Sankara was thus elucidating these commentaries and establishing their supremacy by the refutation of

other systems of thought, some prominent Saivas and Vaishnavas of the place, who showed hostility to Vedantic thought, were defeated in argument by the Acharya's principal disciple Sureswara. Some of them, who were without pride and animosity, gave up their creed and joined the Acharya, while others, whose hostility and pride made them forget prudence and commonsense, still adhered to their beliefs, biding their time for the Acharya's death. "Vedanta is the teaching of some low-born men. The Veda is pure imagination,"—thus condemning the Veda, these men cultivated instense hatred for Sankara as Paundraka did towards Sri Krishna. It is certain that they, too, would in the end meet with the same fate as Paundraka. To those who studied the great teachings of Sankara, the philosophies of Kanada and Kapila seemed childish; the Saiva doctrines looked unholy; the Sakta teachings appeared perverse; the Vaishnava creeds sounded self-contradictory; and the Buddhistic philosophies looked contemptible. The teachings of all these schools appeared as mere fairy tales, and not serious philosophic thought. As Sankara continued his merciless refutation of all hostile creeds and philosophies, the teachings of the Tathagata became lifeless, the school of Kumarila became silent, the Naiyayika philosophy became weak and paralysed, and Kapila's system also followed suit.

CANTO 11

ENCOUNTER WITH THE FIERCE BHAIRAVA

The Kapalika's plea for the Acharya's Head

(1-28) One day Sankara, the conqueror of all the passions and the resort of even rishis who have conquered their lower self, was resting at a solitary spot after he had delivered his discourses on the Bhashya. A fierce and cruel-hearted Kapalika now approached him with evil intentions in the guise of an ascetic, even as Ravana did in times of old. Delighted with the thought that his long awaited opportunity had now dawned, he approached the Acharya and curtly told him what he wanted. He said: "Having heard much about your life and about your great qualities like omniscience, mercy, goodness, etc., I have come here to see you in person. You are the universally respected teacher of non-dualism, who has overcome identification with the body, cast away all infatuations, and defeated every form of dualism in debate. You have assumed your body for the good of others. Your fame, even the Devas praise. With your merciful look you remove the sufferings and anxieties of good men. And with your kind words you grant whatever blessings people want. You are the ocean of all virtues. You command the respect of the whole world. Your knowledge has no limits. No one can stand before you in debate. You are without any tinge of ego. You are the supremely liberal one who bestows all you possess on others. Great men of such excellences generally grant to their suppliants whatever prayers they make. I can achieve a great object of mine through an all-knowing one like you and win the grace of my deity, namely, Kapali or Siva sporting a skull in his hand. I performed austerities for a hundred years in order to get a boon from Siva, which would enable me to attain to Kailasa with this very physical body and enjoy the felicity of that heavenly region with this body itself. Lord Siva, being propitiated, declared to me: 'Your object will be fulfilled if you can perform a sacrifice, offering in fire the head of either a crowned king, or in the alternative, of an all-knowing person.' Ever since then I have been in quest of these, but I have till now failed to get the head of either a king or an all-knowing person. Fortunately, I have today come across an omniscient personage who lives only

for the good of others. The object of my quest is now obtained. If a king's head is not available, a sage's head is required for my rite. Whatever one may do, it is impossible to get a king's head. So my only hope lies in you. If you grant your head to me, you will attain to fame, and I, to the fulfilment of my desire. You can easily do this, knowing fully, as you do, that this body is perishable. It is rather delicate to make a request like this; for, the body is dear to every one. But as far as you are concerned, you are a man of renunciation without any attachment to the body; you live only for the good of others. Generally men who are extremely selfish never think of the suffering or loss of others. Indra got from Dadhichi his very bones for killing Vritra. Men like Dadhichi gladly gave to others their impermanent physical body and attained to the permanent and respected body of universal fame. Their virtues were only for the good of others. If there are in this world a few who are full of fellow-feeling, peaceful at heart, and bearing a body only for the good of fellow-beings, there are also others like me, who, without any mercy at heart, care only for selfish gains. For a desireless person like you, of what value is life except for doing good to others? But men like me, who are under the grip of our own selfish hopes and aspirations, know of no other good than the fulfilment of these. I have heard that Jimutavahana gave up his life, and Dadhichi, his very bones, in the service of others, and they have attained to immortal fame. I, whom all virtuous men criticise, have asked of you for something which no embodied being would like to part with. Yet, I am emboldened by the knowledge that for the knowers of truth, filled with the spirit of renunciation, there is nothing that they would be reluctant to gift, including their head. The Masters of my school say that the sacrifice of the head of one who has been pure all through life is what leads to the fulfilment of one's object. In this world there is hardly any one who fulfils these requirements. So I salute you. Be gracious enough to give me your head." So saying, the Kapalika prostrated himself before Sankara. Without thinking much about the pros and cons of this request, Sankara, who was full of mercy to suppliants, replied as follows: "Gladly shall I give you my head. I do not find anything wrong in your request. Who that knows the body to be perishable will be reluctant to gift it for the good of others? Time will destroy this body, however much one

may try to preserve it. So, what greater glory and gain can there be for man than his body perishing for the good of others? But I cannot give you the head publicly. I shall be at a particular solitary spot in the state of Samadhi. Come there and take off my head. I gift it to you. But, if my disciples get any inkling of this arrangement, they will by all means obstruct it. For, they look up on me as their saviour. Just as one is reluctant to give up one's body, so also is one reluctant to allow a beloved person to be lost."

Padmapada foils the Kapalika's Plan

(29-36) Then by mutual consultation they fixed a date and a secret meeting place for the Kapalika to perform his nefarious deed. Satisfied immensely, the Kapalika went home, while the Acharya continued to stay at his Ashrama without revealing to any one what had transpired between him and the Kapalika. On the appointed day, the Kapalika arrived at the place in his ceremonial dress. Armed with a trident, wearing a prominent three-pronged mark on the forehead, with eyes red and rolling under the effect of liquor, wearing garlands of bones all over his body, and glancing all around to see whether anyone was noticing him, the fierce Kapalika stood there in readiness to execute his murderous mission. At a time when all his disciples had gone for their ablutions, the Acharya withdrew from his Ashrama to the appointed solitary spot, so that Sanandana and other disciples might not get any inkling of what was taking place. Seeing the fierce-looking Kapalika in readiness, the Acharya prepared himself to give up his body. Uttering the holy syllable 'Om', he withdrew the senses into the mind and the mind into the Spirit. With his neck and back bone steady, his palms lying supine on the knees, his face calm, his eyes half open and fixed as if it were on the nose tip, he sat there in the blissful state of Nirvikalpa Samadhi like the sage Sanatsujata. All his external senses were withdrawn and merged in Pure Consciousness, so that he was completely oblivious of his physical environment. Finding that his opportune moment had come, the Kapalika approached the Acharya with his sword uplifted to chop off his head, when the whole plot that was developing suddenly flashed on the mind of the disciple Padmapada, otherwise known as Sanandana.

(37-44) Seeing on the screen of his heart the picture of the

Kapalika approaching the Acharya with uplifted sword and trident, the whole personality of the devoted disciple flared up like a burning mass of fire. Padmapada had attained Siddhi in the Mantra of Nrisimha, the Man-Lion Incarnation of the Lord who was attracted by Prahlada's devotion and who always removes the sufferings of people that surrender to Him. The consciousness of Nrisimha took possession of him, and he became the Nrisimha himself for the time being. His human consciousness was gone, and he became an embodiment of ferocity. In that mood he leapt into the sky, driving away the clouds by the slash of his manes, filling all beings with fear by his thunderous roars, and stunning all, including the gods, with the vigour and speed of his movement. As the whole of Nature got agitated and the worlds trembled in consternation at this manifestation of divine power as ferocity, Padmapada caught hold of the Kapalika while he was aiming his trident at the Acharya's head, and tore open his chest with his nails, as the Nrisimha did to Hiranya. The body that was thus opened with the nails,he lifted up with his projecting molars (*damshtra*), and roared again and again, spreading terror in the neighbourhood. Alarmed by the sound and commotion, the disciples who had gone away for their ablutions hurried back to the Ashrama, and saw the Acharya in Samadhi and the corpse of the Kapalika lying nearby.

Padmapada's Story about Nrisimha

(45-58) The disciples now asked Sanandana in great astonishment how the Lord Nrisimha happened to be gracious to him and do this great deed through him. Sanandana replied to them smiling, "In my early days, I performed austerities for a very long time in the holy forest on the top of the mountain Bala in order to propitiate Lord Nrisimha, who always responds to the whole-hearted devotion of votaries. On many a day, a hunter who used to pass by was in the habit of asking me, 'O Yogin! Why are you staying alone in this mountain cave?' One day I answered him, saying, 'O hunter! I am in quest of that wonderful being who has a human body up to the neck and a lion's face above. He abides in this forest, but I have not yet been able to meet him.' When I had said this much, the hunter went into the forest, and not long after, returned with the Nrisimha (man-lion) tied with creepers.

With a heart filled with astonishment, I asked that divine being, 'Even Rishis find it difficult to attain to you. How could this hunter then get at you so quickly?' That divine being said, 'Even Rishis are not able to concentrate so whole-heartedly on me like this hunter. Even you are not able to do so.' So saying, he disappeared, blessing me." While these co-disciples of his stood astonished at these words of his, the luminous Nrisimha began to roar once again deafening the quarters. Sankara now came out of his Samadhi, opened his eyes, and saw standing before him this fierce Nrisimha form. His manes of wild growth were white like the moon, while his fierce eyes glowed below his forehead like the sun. He was luminous like a galaxy of suns and his thunderous roars filled the quarters. His body was smeared with the blood of the Kapalika whose chest he had torn with his nails. On his chest was the Srivatsa mark, and on his neck, the Kaustubha gem along with the entrails of the slain foe. All the worlds were trembling at the sight of him and at the flames of fire issuing out of his mouth like several tongues licking the skies. From the pores of his skin sparks of fire were flying out everywhere. His face, with teeth grimly pressed, evoked awe even in the minds of Brahma and Siva who called out to him in fear, "O Lord! Be pacified; unleash not the deluge prematurely."

The Acharya's Hymn to Nrisimha

(59-75) The great Acharya saw before himself this formidable Nrisimha form, the movement of whose lolling tongue looked like streaks of lightning darting out in different directions. Without the least sign of fear, he praised him thus with over-flowing devotion. "O Lord Nrisimha! Abandon Thy ferocious anger for the good of the worlds. Thy enemy has already perished. Be now gracious, so that the worlds may be free from the fear generated by Thy terrific eyes. Anger is not suited to Thee who art famous for Thy Sattvika nature. How is it that Hari (Vishnu) has assumed Hara's (Siva's) quality of Tamas, of which anger is a manifestation. By adoring Thee, man overcomes all fears and enjoys felicity. How much more will be the benefits that accrue from this direct vision of Thee! One who thinks of Thee at death will surely be liberated. For this man who has met with death at Thy hands, there is no more involvement in the cycle of births and deaths.

When the much persecuted Prahlada declared that Thou art everywhere, and his father Hiranyakasipu challenged this statement, Thou, as if to validate the statement of the devotee, did manifest Thyself from the pillar and bestow Thy grace on him. At the time of creation Thou assumest the quality of Rajas; for the preservation of it, Thou takest up the bow, though Thou art full of Sattva; and for the destruction of it, Thou assumest Tamas as Hara. Thou hast really no birth and no assumption of Gunas. All Thy manifestations are meant for the blessing of the worlds. 'Thy state is beyond words and thought,' say the Srutis with trepidation. O Nrisimha! At the very mention of Thy name evil spirits flee. None of demoniacal nature can approach Thee. Thou art the source of creation, preservation and destruction. Thou art the cause of all. Thou shinest in all pure hearts. I seek shelter in Thee, who art of the nature of Pure Consciousness. This evil one is dead. Be gracious to withdraw this terrific form of Thine which is striking terror into the hearts of all. May Thy roars, which defeat even the sound produced when the worlds are destroyed from the fire emanating from the third eye of Siva, generate that fire of knowledge which destroys the miseries of beings enfolded in the womb of worldly existence! May Thy terrific roars destroy the miseries of all! Thy terrific roar defeats the sound produced when in times of yore the Devas and the Asuras churned the milk ocean, using Mandara mountain as the churning rod and the serpent Vasuki as the churning string. It also surpasses the sound of Hara's Damaru (a kind of drum) which reverberates in the quarters at the time of cosmic dissolution. May Thy roars dissipate all evil from the world! These terrific peals of your laughter defeat the grunting roars of Thy incarnation as the Cosmic Boar, which excelled even the thunderous sound of the clouds at cosmic dissolution." By this great hymn, the Nrisimha became pacified and resumed his mild and peaceful aspect. Immediately Padmapada was found to be awakening into his usual state as if from sleep, and he fell down prostrate at his teacher's feet. The devotee who studies this great episode with purity, faith and devotion, would have the fulfilment of all his objects and attain to liberation.

CHAPTER 12

THE COMING OF SOME DISCIPLES

The Acharya at Gokarna

(1-5) Once, while the Acharya was travelling with his disciples from one pilgrimage to another, the party arrived at the holy spot of Gokarna on the sea-shore. The Acharya worshipped there at the shrine of Siva, who is the divine director of this stage of the world, who is adored by Brahma and all the gods, and who has His consort Parvati on the left side of His body. He sang a hymn of praise as follows: "I meditate on the form of Siva, the destroyer of Cupid, whose right side is illumined by His own radiance of sky-like whiteness and the left by the lighting-like brilliance of His consort Parvati who shares the left half of His body (in his Ardhanariswara form). In this combined form of Siva-Parvati, the hand of the Siva-half is shivering because of movements of the deer in it, as the deer leans to nibble at the grass-like beams of brilliance proceeding from the Devi-half; and the left arm of the Devi-half is also in turn shivering, as the parrot in that hand is struggling to peck at the corn-like bunches of brilliance coming from the Siva-half. This manifestation of Divine Radiance, in which the forbidding darkness of the poisonmark on Siva's neck is neutralised by the mellow light of the Mangalya-sutra on the Devi's neck-- with this Radiance I am one in Non-dual Consciousness."

Hymn to Hari-Sankara

(6-19) For three days and nights Sankara stayed at that holy spot, performing with great devotion the worship of the Lord of Gokarna--the Being that transcends the Gunas. From there the Acharya, who was on a pilgrimage to all holy places, next proceeded to the temple of Hari-Sankara. The image there being the combined form of Siva and Vishnu, this place of pilgrimage is equal in holiness to Kailasa and Vaikuntha put together. There, with a hymn having a double meaning, so as to refer to both Siva and Vishnu simultaneously, he praised the Deity Hari-Sankara, who, as it were to dispel the doubts of people who looked upon Siva and Vishnu as two, has manifested in a single form, with hand held in the pose indicative of Non-duality. The following is

the hymn with which he praised Hari-Sankara, simultaneously invoking both Siva and Vishnu in His incarnations: "May the worshipful Being Mahavishnu, who assumed the form of the Fish in the cosmic waters and restored to its proper place, the earth that had taken the shape of a boat— bless me." The same in the Siva sense means: "May the great God Siva who has the crescent moon on His forehead, who wedded Parvati, the daughter of Mena, and who is always associated with His bull— grant me all that is auspicious." The second verse, as praise of Vishnu: "May that Being (Mahavishnu) who assumed the form of a tortoise suited for the support of the churning rod of Mandara mountain and who thus helped the Devas, be gracious unto me." The same, as praise of Siva: "May I have the grace of that great God Siva who has assumed a suitable form for His sportive manifestations on mount Kailasa, who is adored with Mandara flowers, and who drank poison for the protection of the Devas." The third verse, as praise of Vishnu: "I fold my hands in adoration of Him who incarnated as the great Cosmic Boar and restored the earth to her position." The same, as praise of Siva: "I fold my hands in adoration of Him who shines with the great serpent Vasuki as His ornament and who sustains the devotee in his life of devotion." The fourth verse, as praise of Vishnu: "I adore Mahavishnu the Man-Lion who destroyed Hiranyakasipu, the king of Asuras, and was extremely solicitous about the welfare of Prahlada." The same, as praise of Siva: "I worship Him who has five faces, who holds the Ganga in his hair, and who gladdened the heart of the Devas by the destruction of Gajasura." The fifth verse as praise of Vishnu: "I prostrate before the great Vamana who performed austerities as a Brahmacharin with deer skin as his wearing cloth, who was without a consort, and who got back the worlds from the Asura, Bali." The same, as praise of Siva: "I salute Lord Siva who was desirous of getting the sacrificial offerings at the Yajna of Daksha-prajapati, who lost His consort Sati, and who thenceforth performed austerities as a Brahmacharin, and who looks handsome with his wearing cloth of skin." The sixth verse, as praise of Vishnu: "May I receive the protection of Mahavishnu who incarnated himself as Parasurama, who had the brilliant form of a Brahmacharin, who was luminous like the moon, and who defeated Kartaviryarjuna in battle." The same, as praise

of Siva: "May I receive the protection of Siva, who as Kirata defeated Arjuna and who has the river Ganga and the disc of the moon in His matted locks." The seventh verse, as praise of Vishnu: "May Rama, who with the prowess attained by the knowledge of numerous divine missiles, defeated Ravana, and who had Sita as his consort, bestow happiness upon me." The same, as praise of Siva: "May the Great God Siva who dispels all untruth by the brilliance of his Truth-nature, and who destroyed Kama Deva (Cupid) having ten-pronged manifestations, and who had the daughter of the mountains as His consort, bestow happiness upon me." The eighth verse, as praise of Vishnu: "May Balarama, who has the palm tree as his standard, who is an embodiment of Eternal Dharma, who is forbidding on account of his fierce voice under the influence of liquor and the plough weapon on his shoulder, who is fondled by his father Vasudeva, and who is of indescribable brilliance – protect me." The same, as praise of Siva: "May Siva who excels as a dancer, who is of the nature of Moksha-dharma, whose neck looks forbidding by the brilliance of the poison Halahala sticking to it, whose crown is kissed by the moon, and who is of indescribable brilliance—protect me." The ninth verse, as praise of Vishnu: "May I receive the protection of Mahavishnu having by His side Garuda, who incites terror in the minds of serpents, and who in His Krishna-incarnation charmed even the mind of Putana, and who has a crown of peacock feathers adorning His head." The same, as praise of Siva: "May I be protected by the Lord Siva, in whose lap is Vinayaka seated embracing Him with his trunk, who has the Ganga on His crown, whose name is sanctifying, who presents Himself in the minds of those who meditate on Him, and who has the moon as his decoration." The tenth verse, as praise of Vishnu: "I worship that spiritual Radiance manifested as Buddha, who was all-knowing, who was the conqueror of Mara, who was full of mercy, who was of the nature of Bodha (spiritual consciousness), and who was the adored of those who were opponents of Yajnas." The same, as praise of Siva: "I worship that spiritual Radiance Siva, who is all-knowing, who is the destroyer of Cupid (Mara), who is full of mercy, who is all knowledge, and who is praised by those who destroyed the Yajna of Daksha." The eleventh verse, in praise of Mahavishnu: "I offer my salutations to Mahavishnu as Kalki-incarnation, who assumes

a body of inconceivable splendour, who removes the world's darkness of ignorance by spiritual illumination, and whose advent is specially for destruction of evil ones and the protection of the good and the holy." The same, as praise of Siva: "I salute Lord Siva whose inconceivably holy form removes the world's ignorance by its spiritual splendour, and who resides ever in holy places like Kasi."

The Acharya at Mookambika

(20-24) After having adored Hari-Sankara and praised Him with this beautiful hymn (each verse of it having a double meaning so as to apply to Vishnu and Siva at the same time), the Acharya proceeded further south to the shrine of Mookambika. On the way, he came across a Brahmana woman weeping bitterly with the dead body of her only son on her lap. Her husband was standing by her side. The most merciful Acharya was deeply affected by the sight, when be heard a disembodied voice from the skies telling, "There is no use of grieving in situations that are beyond one's power to relieve. Pity here will result only in mental agony to one so pitying." On hearing this, the enlighted one said: "What I have heard from the Supreme Being is correct. It is only the grace of that Being who creates, preserves and destroyes, that can achieve what is impossible for limited beings to do." At these words of the Acharya, the child awoke as from a sleep, and all were astonished at the wonderful play of the Lord.

(25-37) Then the Acharya reached the temple of Mookambika of great spiritual power, which was surrounded by a dense and attractive growth of trees and plants like mango trees, jack trees, palms, pomegranates, sugar cane and the like. With eyes brimming with tears of bliss and with all the hairs on end, that great sage Sankara, possessed of the spirit of universal benevolence, recited the following hymn in praise of the Divine Mother with a heart overflowing with devotion: "O Mother! It is the three hundred and sixty rays of light proceeding from Thy lotus feet that reflect all through the year as the light of the sun, the moon and the fire. Men versed in Thy worship according to the ritualistic code adore Thee with sixtyfour proceedures of worship and with rich offerings including costly garments. Others worship Thee with non-material offerings. They offer Thee worship with these sixtyfour procedures in the six psychic centres along the Sushumna path. Ordinary

people worship Thee with material offerings; middling devotees with mental offerings followed by physical offerings; and great ones with spiritual worship only. But when one is established in Non-dual Consciousness, no question of worship or adoration arises. Thou hast thirty eight aspects, of which five lead to liberation. Wise men always adore Thy feet which excel every other aspect. As the fire of cosmic destruction, Thou burnest up the universe; as life-giving ambrosia, Thou createst the worlds; and as the soul of immortality, Thou preservest it and redeemest the Jivas. Those who contemplate Thee in these three aspects attain spiritual felicity. Those who want to adore Thee first grasp the truth about Thee from the instruction of the Guru, then realise it in Samadhi, and attain to the state of Non-duality. Those who meditate on Thee in the lowest Chakras, known as Muladhara and Swadhisthana, are prompted by worldly desires and attain only to them. Those who adore Thee in Manipura just reach the gate of Thy spiritual being. Those who meditate on Thee in the Anahata-chakra, attain to Thy region; those who do so in the Visuddhi-chakra attain closeness to Thee; and those doing so in the Ajna-chakra attain to equality of bliss with Thee. The highest type of Sadhakas who meditate on Thee in the thousand-petalled lotus in the head, known otherwise as Dhruva-mandala, overcome the interest in the four forms of communion and attain to oneness with Thee. These four forms of communion are: the unity of Sri Chakra and the six Chakras in the body; the unity of the Mantras pertaining to the Sri Chakra and the six Chakras; the unity of Sri Chakra and Thyself; and the unity of the Mantras of Sri Chakra and Thyself. The Sadhaka recognises all these forms of unity."

Coming of the Disciple Hastamalaka

(38-53) For several days the Acharya stayed there adoring the Devi and receiving the reverential homage of many spiritual aspirants there. During his stay, he took the food obtained by holy begging (Bhiksha). On one of those days, he visited with his disciples a village of Brahmanas named Sri Bali, where every house emitted the holy smell of the smoke of Agnihotra sacrifice. In that place, inhabited by about two thousand Brahmanas who had abandoned all prohibited actions and spent all their time in the study of the Veda, in the performance of Swadharma and

Yajnas, no untimely death ever took place. There was a temple in that village, in which was installed Lord Siva and His Consort in combination, who looked like an ornament of gold studded with gems, or the sky with the disk of the moon. Among the inhabitants of that village was one named Prabhakara who was noted for his learning, his adherence to Vedic rites, and his life of holiness and beneficence. Though he had plenty of cattle, wealth and relatives, he was not happy because his only son was dumb and behaved like an idiot. Though the boy was handsome in appearance and very gentle and patient in demeanour, his behaviour in other respects was like that of an idiot—hearing nothing, talking nothing, and sitting in some corner alone in reverie. The Brahmana Prabhakara was spending anxious days and awaiting an opportunity to approach some wise man to know the cause of his son's strange behaviour—whether it was due to possession, the result of past actions, or merely his nature. He now heard that a great personage accompanied by many disciples and moving with a big library of books, had come to the village, and he decided to approach him with his son. Following the injunction that one should not visit with empty hands a deity, a king or a spiritual teacher, he approached Sankara with a load of fruits and prostrated at his feet. His son, who was shining in appearance like a fire-brand covered with ashes, was also made to prostrate before him. But the boy, idiotic as he was in behaviour, continued to be in the prostrate position and refused to get up. The sage, however, lifted him up in his infinite mercy, and as the boy was standing there, with face looking down, his father asked Sankara to enlighten him on the cause of the strange behaviour of his son. He said: "He is now seven years old, and his mind seems to be undeveloped. He has not even learnt the alphabets, not to speak of the Vedas. The early period of his life has thus gone in vain. Boys of his age come and call him for play, but he does not join them. Seeing him sitting silent, boys beat him; still he will not show any sign of annoyance. Sometimes he comes for food, sometimes he abstains from all food. He does not heed any instruction. I never try to rectify him by punishment, but have left it to his fate to direct his future."

(54-62) When the Brahmana thus finished his submission, the Acharya addressed the boy thus: "Who are you? Why are you thus behaving like an inert being?" To this, the boy replied,

"O great teacher! Certainly I am not an inert thing. Even an inert thing becomes conscious in association with me. I am one with undivided Bliss, free from the six states of grief, namely, infatuation, hunger, thirst, old age and death, as also from the six conditions of beginning, continuance, growth, change, decay and destruction. This consciousness of the Atman is common to all liberated ones." In this way, in twelve verses, he expounded the doctrine of the spiritual Self. As the knowledge of the Self was natural to him like an Amalaka fruit in one's hand, he became famous under the name of Hastamalaka. The Acharya was surprised to see that this boy had the knowledge of the Atman even without the instruction of a teacher, and he blessed him, placing his hands on his head. Then the Acharya said to the boy's father: "It is not befitting that this boy should stay with you. And since his behaviour is like that of an idiot, what good can you derive by his stay with you? This apparently dumb son of yours knows the truth of the Atman by virtue of his practices in his past life. Otherwise, how could this boy, without the knowledge of the 'R's', thus expatiate on the nature of the Self? He must be having inborn intuitive knowledge. He has not the least attachment to house and property. Nor has he any sense of 'I-ness' with regard to the body. How can one who knows all these objects, including the body, as external and unconnected with oneself, have any identification with them?" Saying so, the Acharya took that boy also into his party and started towards his next destination. The boy's father also followed him for some distance and then returned to his place.

The Acharya at Sringa-giri and Coming of Totaka

(63-69) Then, this great sage, whom the Devas praised and who had conquered all the desires of the heart, travelled with Padmapada and other disciples to the place called Sringa-giri (Sringeri), where the sage Risya-sringa had for a long time meditated on the Supreme Self. Nearby flows the Tungabhadra, which brings good to all who bathe in its waters. The place was inhabited by a large number of virtuous people who were noted for their hospitality and the performance of Vedic Yajnas. There, the Acharya expounded to learned and receptive scholars his commentaries, which are so profound that even by hearing them one advances in the path of salvation. Like a Vachaspati, excelling

even Adisesha's power of expression, he expounded the doctrine of the unity of the Self with Brahman, and rid the people of their superstitions. There, at Sringa-giri, he had a temple, as graceful as those of Indra-loka, built and installed therein an image of the Divine Mother and instituted Her forms of worship. At the end of the Mandana Misra episode, he had received the promise from the Divine Mother (as Ubhaya-bharati) that She would reside wherever he would invoke Her in future. So he installed Her there at Sringa-giri under the name of Mother Sarada, and there She resides even to this day, granting devotees their prayers. At this place a new disciple named Giri joined the Acharya. He was noted for his obedience, industry, righteousness and taciturnity. His devotion to the service of the teacher was such that he would do everything for him anticipating his want. Thus he would take his bath before his teacher, make all arrangements for his personal needs like cleaning of teeth, ablutions, sitting, sleeping, etc. He would shampoo his feet and follow him like a shadow. He would never do before the teacher anything smacking of disrespect—never sit listlessly before him, talk too much in his presence, or turn his back to him. He always walked behind the teacher, stopped when he stopped, listened attentively to whatever he said, and did everything for him even without being told. One day, this disciple had gone to wash his teacher's clothes and was a bit late in returning, and so the teacher, out of love for the disciple, delayed his discourse for a time, awaiting his arrival. As it was getting late, some of the other disciples started the Santipatha uttered at the beginning of the class, but the teacher stopped them and asked them to wait for a while until the disciple Giri returned. Thereupon, Padmapada said, pointing to a wall near by with his eye, "Whom are we to wait for? What qualification has a fellow, so dull as that wall, for the study of the Sastra?" In order to dispel the pride of these disciples, and out of his love for the one they traduced, the Acharya awakened in him, by an act of will, the knowledge of fourteen subjects. With all knowledge awakened in him by the grace of the Guru, the disciple Giri now appeared on the scene, uttering a great hymn in the metre known as Totaka, and for this reason he afterwards came to be known by the name Totaka. "On the supporting tree of the Acharya grows the creeper of devotion, taking its root at his own feet and watered by his grace. On that creeper, on the stalk

called 'Totaka', has grown this fruit of a wonderful poem which will for all time be relished by the superb parrots, the 'men of wisdom.' Devotion to the Guru is an aid like a ladder that helps man in ascending to that high, sky-transcending state of spiritual absorption, from which all the three worlds look very small. What wonder is there if the veil of ignorance was so rapidly dispelled in one who knew the proper use of this aid! "It must indeed be the grace of the Acharya that enabled the fool of this fellow to compose the great poem in Totaka metre, embodying all the highest teachings of the Veda." So thought all the disciples. Thus on witnessing the wisdom and the poetical skill that their co-disciple had acquired through his devotion to the Guru, Padmapada and others abandoned their pride of learning and came to hold him in high regard. As this poem emerged from this disciple's mind entirely out of his devotion to the Guru and as it took shape in Totaka metre, he (that disciple) has come to be known as Totakacharya among wise men. This brief but superbly beautiful, well-reasoned and profound poem in Totaka metre, introductory to the study of the Vedanta, is even to this day known among scholars as Totakam. Receiving the new name of Totaka from the Acharya, and equalling Padmapada himself in learning and intelligence, he came to be known as one of the chief disciples of Sankara. On seeing these four principal disciples of the Acharya—Hastamalaka, Padmapada, Sureswara and Totaka—wise men wondered whether they were the four Vedas themselves embodied, or the four Purusharthas (the four Values of Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha) taken shape, or the four faces of Brahma manifest, or the four forms of liberation (Salokya, Samipya, Sarupya and Sayujya) embodied and come to reside among men. The fortunate men who have come to appreciate and have faith in the highest teachings of the Acharya and the Supreme Bliss to which it opens the way, care a trifle for the felicities of the region of Indra with its unique elephant Airavata, the sweet music of bees, and all the delights connected with it. The Acharya shone bright with his fame spreading everywhere, whitening the quarters, as if it were the spray that splashed from the milk ocean on being churned with the Mandara mountain. He shone amidst the luminaries constituted of his disciples, who were competent to put down by their very look the pride of scholars representing various spurious and dubious doctrines.

CANTO 13

PREACHING OF BRAHMA VIDYA

Writing of an Exegesis on Sutra-bhashya

(1-21) One day Sureswara, desirous of writing some exegesis on his Master's great commentary on the *Sāriraka-bhāshya*, approached him and said: "O great teacher! Please tell me how I could help you in your mission. To live in the service of his teacher is the only desirable form of life for a disciple." Glad at the disciple's request, Sankara said to him: "You may write for my commentary a *vārtikam* (an exegesis giving a critical exposition)." "I am not equipped enough to have a comprehensive understanding of your great commentary," said Sureswara, "yet, if I have your grace, I shall try to do as you have ordered." After he had departed to fulfil his teacher's command, some of the disciples approached their teacher and began to warn him thus: "This effort of Sureswara, in place of helping the propagation of your message, may have a contrary effect. Was he not, till the other day, a great upholder of the philosophy of ritualistic Karma? He, as Mandana, had been preaching that ritualistic Karma giving the fruit of heaven is the message of the Veda, and that there is no God other than Karma. All Puranas speak of the creation and destruction of the worlds as a real process. Vyasa was the author of all these Puranas, and Jaimini, the founder of ritualistic philosophy, was the disciple of this Vyasa. The world and its processes are real—says the doctrine supported by both Vyasa and Jaimini. For, between the disciple and his teacher, there can be no difference in view, and even if there is, the teacher's is the Siddhanta (the thesis on the doctrine), and the disciple's but a modification of it. Such were the views he held as Mandana. From his birth he has been following and preaching the ritualistic code, which holds that all doctrines, differing from the view that the attainment of heavenly felicities through the performance of Vedic rituals is the highest end of life, are worthless. O great teacher! An exegesis that a person with such views writes on your works, be it with your permission, is bound to be a perversion of your commentaries; for, it will have Vedic ritualism as its dominant keynote. It will be like applying the axe at one's own roots. Getting defeated in

debate, he took Sannyasa in a weak moment, and not because he has real faith in it. He cannot be relied upon. We are firmly of the opinion that he should not be entrusted with the duty of writing this exegesis. For, according to his view, no one who has competence to do Vedic rituals should abandon it. Sannyasa is meant for those who are idiots, lame, blind or in other ways disabled and are incapable of the strenuous life of a ritualistic householder. This is the view that the followers of Kumarila Bhatta have been propagating, and this Sureswara, till now known as Mandana, belongs to that school of thought. He should never be trusted. Now please permit us to draw your attention to the most competent person. Perhaps you might remember that sometime back when all of us disciples were standing on the opposite side of the Ganga, you called us to come to you quickly, as a test of our devotion to the teacher. Hearing your sudden call, we were all in a flurry looking for a boat to cross the river. But Sanandana walked straight over the swiftly flowing waters of the Ganga. Seeing his uncommon devotion to the Guru, Mother Ganga supported each step he took with a lotus of gold. Thus, immensely pleased to see him cross the Ganga walking over lotuses, you were pleased to give him the name of Padmapada. Here is that Padmapada, who was born with knowledge and who by his service of you has completely got over the sense of duality. Among us, he is the most competent person to write an exegesis on your profound commentaries. If an alternative person is required, there is Totaka who, by virtue of his great austerities and your grace, has acquired the blessing of the goddess of learning. This Viswarupa *alias* Mandana *alias* Sureswara has been a fanatical believer in the philosophy of Vedic ritualism. How could you, O great teacher, place so much confidence in him? Let the work of producing the exegesis be given to Padmapada."

Antecedents of Hastamalaka

(22-32) Just then, Padmapada went near the Acharya and began to say: "Here is Hastamalaka. He is competent to write the exegesis. His mastery of the Sastras is such that they are to him like a gooseberry fruit (Amalaka) on one's palm. Hence it is that you have given him the name Hastamalaka." Hearing these words, the great Acharya said: "He is no doubt very clever,

but he is always absorbed in the Spirit and has very little external awareness. He did not learn the three R's, nor did he study the Vedas under an instructor. He had no interest in food or play, nor did he ever speak a word. Fearing that he was possessed by some ghost, they brought this boy to me. When he saw me, he prostrated before me again and again, and stood before me with palms folded in salutation. All were astonished to see the sudden change in the boy's behaviour. Then, when I asked him about his name, the name of his father, etc., he began to speak in beautiful verses conveying the spirit of Vedanta philosophy. Hearing his son's wonderful power of expression for the first time, his father was astounded and said to me: 'How wonderful is your power! This boy, who was considered dumb and idiotic till now, is now expounding the truth of the Atman in a way that even highly intelligent scholars cannot do. He must have been born as a liberated soul. Let him now follow you as a disciple. For, a swan can live only in a lotus pond and not in the midst of thorny shrubs.' Ever since his father left him, he has been with me. But one like him, whose mind is immersed in Brahman from infancy, will not be able to concern himself with such scholarly undertakings like writing an exegesis on the commentaries."

(33-48) His disciples thereupon enquired: "O great teacher! How did he gain this knowledge of the Atman without receiving instruction in scriptures and other spiritual practices?" Sankara replied: "Once there lived on the banks of the Yamuna a highly evolved saint who had overcome the bondage of Samsara. One day a Brahmana woman who had come for bath in the Yamuna left her two-year-old child on the bank and got into the stream with her companions. The child, slowly crawling from the place where he had been left, fell into the river. Picking up the dead body of the child, the woman came near the hermitage of the ascetic and began to cry aloud in great distress. Taking pity on the mother, the Yogi, by his psychic powers, entered into the body of the inert child, who rose up as Hastamalaka. For this reason, he had a spontaneous knowledge of all scriptures without the aid of any instruction. He is a knower of the Self and there is nothing that he does not know. Yet, a person so indrawn like him is not suited to write scholarly works which require a good deal of externalisation of consciousness. Under the circumstances, Mandana,

who combines in himself all learning and the knowledge of the Self, is more competent to do this work—is he not? He is a man of great reputation, a knower of all Sastras, and one who has struggled hard in the pursuit of Dharma. If he is not suited for the work, who else can be? But, if most of you are opposed to the idea, I do not want to persist in it. But then, I am afraid the whole scheme may fail." At this the disciples said: "Why should the scheme fail? If you command this Sanandana (Padmapada), would it not materialise? He adopted Sannyasa directly from Brahmacharya, without passing through the householder's life. He is well instructed and well qualified." "Sanandana is certainly well qualified," said the Acharya. "So, let him write an independent exegesis. Let Sureswara, our new disciple, also carry out the work that he has already undertaken." Afterwards he called Sureswara apart and said, "Don't proceed with your exegesis. The other disciples do not seem to have sufficient confidence in your competence to do this work. They say that as Mandana you had held the view that monasticism (Sannyāsāshrama) is foreign to the Vedas, and that you had instructed your gate-keepers never to allow any Sannyasin to enter the precincts of your home. For these reasons the other diciples have no confidence in you. So you better write an independent work and show me. In this way the difficulty created by the suspicions of the other disciples can be overcome." The Acharya settled the question thus, but he had in his mind the fear that the exegesis might not come off at all.

Sureswara and his Exegesis

(49-62) Following the Acharya's fresh instruction in view of the objections of the other disciples, Sureswara produced his work called the *Naishkarmya-siddhi.* This work, establishing the unmodified nature of the Atman, is famous for the beauty of its style and the soundness of its reasoning. Himself much pleased with the work, the Acharya showed it to the disciples. They, too, felt pleased with it, and felt convinced that Sureswara was unrivalled in the correct understanding of the meaning of the scriptures. Wherever great Sannyasins study and teach about the Atman that is unmodified by any action, and seek to live in that poise, this work, the *Naishkarmya-siddhi*, is in use even to this day. Then, Viswarupa (Sureswara) declared: "I started on the work of writing

an exegesis on the commentaries of our Acharya at his command. Others have obstructed it. Whoever may produce such a work hereafter, may it not gain currency in the world of scholars!" Pronouncing such a curse, he dedicated his new work to the Acharya and prayed to him thus: "It is not any thought of fame, or gain, or patronage that induced me to produce this work. It was written sheerly in obedience to the teacher's words. If there is not such obedience, where is relation between Guru and disciple? Today I have not the least trait of a householder, just as a youth would not have the traits of a child, and an old man, of a youth. Nothing is stationary in human life. It is wrong to look on me now as a Grihastha (householder), just because I was that once. Mind is the cause of bondage and liberation. If a man is pure in mind, it is immaterial if he is a Sannyasin or a householder. If my original view was that no Ashrama like Sannyasa was sanctioned by the Veda, how could I have entered into debate with you with the wager that the defeated party should adopt the Ashrama of the winner? If the custom followed by me in my home life was to deny entry and Bhiksha to Sannyasins at my place, pray, Sir, how could you stay there for the many days that the debate with you lasted? People talk anything and everything about others irresponsibly. Their voice cannot be silenced. I became a Sannyasin not merely because I was defeated in argument, but because, through your instruction, I was able to grasp the truth of the Atman and feel the urge for renunciation of the world and all its attachments. After all, the purpose of a debate is to arrive at the truth. In my days as a householder, I wrote scholarly books to combat the views of the followers of the Nyaya school of philosophy. After I renounced the world, I desire for nothing except the service of your feet. Fortunate, indeed, is the man, and liberated is he from all debts, who is able to serve you in your efforts to combat and extinguish the flames of pride and jealousy burning in the minds of various sophistical controversialists who are working for discrediting the doctrine of Advaita in the eyes of wise men."

(63-75) When Mandana finished his submission, the Acharya assuaged, by wise counsel, his grief at the withdrawal of permission for him to write an exegesis on the commentary on the Vedanta Sutras. Sankara now thought of entrustring him with the work of writing exegesis on two of his commentaries—those on the

Brihadaranyaka and the *Taittiriya Upanishads*. Looking into those commentaries which are couched in meaningful, melodious and forceful words, which are based on sound reasoning, and which are full of arguments in support of the Vedantic thesis and in refutation of opposite views, he said to Sureswara: "What you have said is the truth. I appreciate your modesty. I have written a commentary on the *Taittiriya Upanishad*. That commentary is dear to my heart. Write an exegesis on that commentary with the sole purpose of the world's welfare in view. There is also another commentary of mine on the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. You can produce another exegesis on that also. Your sorrow will be completely assuaged by this, and you will be remembered by posterity for these works. Do not have any fear that, as before, any one can make me withdraw this permission. I give you my word." In obedience to the Acharya's command, Viswarupa (Sureswara), the great scholar that he was, soon produced the suggested works on the two commentaries of the Acharya and presented them to him. Some time after, Sanandana (Padmapada), too, as directed by the teacher, wrote a treatise on the Acharya's commentary on the Vedanta Sutras. The first part of it is the famous *Panchapadika* and the remaining portion is called the *Vritti*. Padmapada has tried to show in these works, with great scholarship and force of reasoning, that the Acharya's arrangement and interpretations of the Sutras of Vyasa are on the correct line. He offered this as his Guru-dakshina (a thanks-offering to the teacher). Looking at the position of planets, the Acharya then told Sureswara in privacy: "In this work called *Panchapadika*, only five chapters, especially those portions dealing with the first four Sutras, will receive the attention of posterity (implying, thereby, that this ill-fate would overtake the work because of Sureswara's curse). Owing to your Prarabdha you will have another birth as Vachaspati, when you will write an extensive exposition of the commentaries on the Sutras. That work will be the guide for men to understand the meaning of the commentary for all time."[1] After communciating this to Sureswara, he asked Anandagiri (the same as Totaka) and other disciples to write works on Advaita, and all of them produced works full of spiritual fervour, according to their capacity.

[1] This work of Vachaspati is the famous text the *Bhamati*, which is to this day studied by all serious students of Sankara's *Sutra-bhashya*.

CANTO 14

THE PILGRIMAGE OF PADMAPADA

The Rationale of Pilgrimage

(1-19) Once Padmapada approached the Acharya and sought permission to go on a pilgrimage to holy places. The Acharya thereupon said to him, "The proximity of the Guru is the real place of pilgrimage. The washings of his feet are the holy waters. The attainment of the Atman through the Guru's instruction is the real experience of the Holy Presence which men seek indirectly through the adoration of holy images installed in temples. It is better to be near the Guru, serving him, than go about from place to place. When one has walked long distances and become completely exhausted and sleepy, how can one meditate on the Atman? Sannyasa is of two kinds—the first is of the knowing one, and the second, of the enquirer after the Supreme Truth. In order that they might realise the unity of the 'Thou', indicating the Jiva, with the Supreme Spirit indicated by 'That', the enquirers will have always to be reflecting on the meaning of 'Thou'. This will be difficult for a pilgrim to do; for, a traveller will always have his mind agitated by thoughts such as: "In which place is water available in abundance? In which country is there water scarcity? Where can a place for rest and stay be had? What will one do if afflicted with fever or dysentery? Even one's companions will desert one when one becomes incapacitated by illness to walk or to lie down. Where shall I bathe in the morning? Where shall I get a place suited for worship and meditation? Where shall I get my food today? Where shall I meet a companion?" Thus, the wanderer will have time only to think of his food, shelter and safety." To this Padmapada replied: "It is not proper to raise objections to the Guru's words. Still, I have a word to say. Though the Guru's proximity is equal to residence in a holy place, I feel a mental dissatisfaction for not having visited the different holy places. True, difficulties like want of food and facilities of accommodation will face one. But pray, will living with all conveniences of life enhance one's spiritual stature? Diseases are the result of one's sins of the past. If this be true, they will visit one irrespective of whether one stays in one place or wanders about from place to

place. When a man's allotted time is up, the god of death will not leave him, whether he stays here or in a distant land. The feeling that one has been saved from death, or has succumbed to it, because of being in a particular place, is a mere illusion. Location has nothing to do with it. Manu and other great law-givers have laid it down that rules of purity and daily rites need be observed only according to time and place. They need not be the same at all places and at all times. So, no sin will befall one on account of deviation from those rules. Even in a forest one will get food, if Providence favours one; if It does not, one will not get it wherever one might be. Providence is behind all occurrences in life. There are many people who return home safe after visiting all the holy places. On the other hand, even a man who has never left his home will die. It is vain to search for the causes of these things. Wherever one might be, if one has attained to the joy of Brahmic bliss, one will not fail to have concentration of mind and Samadhi. Such is my conviction. By bathing in holy waters, one gains peace of mind; by seeing many places, one's mental horizon is expanded; and by contacts with holy men, one is saved from dangers of spiritual downfall– such being the advantages of pilgrimage, who will fail to take advantage of an opportunity for it? Even in distant places, there are as many chances of association with good and wise men as here. For good men, good men alone are relatives and friends. Even in a far off place, one can meditate on the Guru thereby gain proximity with him. On the other hand, one who has no devotion to him and who never cultivates the proper attitude towards him, is always isolated from him in spite of physical proximity. The truth is that if persons with good tendencies associate with other good men, their minds develop, and they ultimately get discriminative intelligence."

(20-28) To this the Acharya replied: "If you are so intensely desirous of undertaking a pilgrimage, I do not want to discourage you. I was only testing your determination. I bless that you spend many days in pilgrimage without any ordeals or difficulties. There are many ways leading to holy places, temples and cities. Always go along the safe and frequented paths, and never along the secret pathways used by thieves and robbers. You can stay on the way with holy men here and there for some days, or you can, according to your preference, go straight to your destination.

Contact with good men and discussions with them on Vedantic teachings are always very enlightening; it gives relief to the weary, protection to the suffering, courage to the timid, and joy to the ear and the heart of the participants. Association with holy men has got but one defect. When you part with them, it causes great pangs of heart, just as it gives intense joy during its duration. Well, what is there in this world, be it even great and holy, that is without a touch of defect in it? Do not stay too long in any place. It will create attachments. It will cause undue delay in reaching one's destination. It is better always to arrive at one's destination as early as possible; otherwise, obstacles are likely to occur and even prevent one from reaching the end. Often men, well dressed and polished in speech, will join you. But one should watch them very closely. Or else, one may find one's clothes or books or other possessions missing. Strangers should not be trusted too much. If there is a Sannyasin near your residence, or within a mile, you should see him and do obeisance to him. If worthy people are not respected, one's own welfare is obstructed. Always follow the path of truth and righteousness. Do not have much contact with men of undisciplined mind. Abandoning all crookedness of the mind and established in absolute purity, wander forth with a blissful mind." Padmapada, after having listened to the words of his teacher with great attention, started on his pilgrimage, and the Acharya continued to stay there for some more days with his other disciples.

The Acharya back at Kaladi at his Mother's Death-bed

(29-50) During this time, the Acharya saw through his Yogic insight that the last days of his mother had come. Informing his disciples of this, he travelled through air to his native place where his mother was, in fulfilment of the promise he had made to meet her during her last days. Seeing his weak and sickly mother, he prostrated himself before her, and she, at his sight, was freed from all her distress, just like a sun-baked man, on the appearance of rain-bearing clouds. Though he was established in non-attachment, he became very tender at heart on seeing his mother and said, "O mother! Be not sad. I am by your side. Please tell me your heart's desire." The mother, who was delighted to see her son in good health, replied, "It is, indeed, my great good fortune that

I could meet you now. What more can I want! I do not desire to continue to live on with this old and decrepit body. You see that I attain to my higher evolution, and then cremate my body according to the rules of the Sastras." On hearing from his mother what she expected of him, he began to instruct her on the nature of Brahman—eternal, self-effulgent, immeasurable, free from defects, devoid of mutations like birth, old age and death, devoid of all illusory modifications, partless, unitive, of the nature of Consciousness-Bliss, and all-pervading. The mother then said: "O my son! My mind can find no rest in such an impersonal, abstract, qualityless Being. For my sake, recite the praise of the attractive Divine Person and reveal Him to me." With his heart touched by love and pity, the Acharya recited an inspired hymn in praise of God Siva, whereupon there came on the scene the emissaries of Siva with their paraphernalia of trident and the rest. The mother was frightened to see them. Thereupon the Acharya recited a hymn in praise of Mahavishnu—of Vishnu lying on the serpent-bed with Sri sitting at the feet and Bhu and Nila on either side, with Garuda always standing in attendance nearby, and with a body bedecked with shining ornaments and radiant like a blue mountain reflecting the light of the sun. When the son recited the hymn in praise of Mahavishnu, the mother saw the above radiant form of Pure Consciousness within, and died with her mind absorbed in Him. The emissaries of Mahavishnu arrived with their divine vehicle of lunar brilliance, and the mother, who was much pleased with them, expressed her thankfulness to the son, and ascended that vehicle with her spiritual body. Passing through the intermediate realms of subtlety like those of Agni, Vayu, Surya, etc., she transcended even the realm of Brahma and attained to Vaikuntha, the abode of Mahavishnu. With the idea of doing the cremation and funeral obsequies of his mother himself, the Acharya called upon the relatives and neighbours of the family to help him in this. But they, in great disgust, laughed at him scornfully and questioned, "O Sannyasin, what competence have you to perform such rites?" Though he begged for their co-operation on bended knees, they not only turned a deaf ear, but refused to give even fire to cremate the body. Extremely angry at this behaviour, the Acharya himself made a funeral pyre at the gate of the house with some dry wood, generated fire out of his own right hand, and performed the cre-

mation. Then he cursed the people of the place: "May you become incompetent to study the Vedas! May no Sannyasin visit your home for Bhiksha! May you cremate dead bodies in your own compounds!"

(51-53) From the time of the curse, Vedic study declined in that place and Sannyasins never took Bhiksha in the homes of those people. They were also obliged to follow the custom of cremating dead bodies in their own house compounds. How can one insulting great ones attain happiness? One should not insult or trouble another, seeing that he is a very mild person. All of a sudden, he may become angry unexpectedly, just as fire can come out of pieces of a sandalwood tree when struck, in spite of its parts being cool and sweet-smelling. This curse may look contrary to the high ideal of a Sannyasin. But the actions of men of transcending greatness should never be condemned (as they are like fire which can consume anything in it). Parasurama is seen to have killed his own mother, and a sage of the line of Bhrigu is said to have cursed some children to become the food of wolves.

Account of Padmapada's Pilgrimage

(54-73) After the Acharya had conferred the eternal state of Vaikuntha on his mother, he travelled through several places, controverting the doctrines of hostile philosophies. And then, he stayed on at a fixed place, awaiting the arrival of Padmapada. Padmapada had by that time visited many holy places in the northern part of the country and had reached the southern region which is specially sacred to the holy sage, Agastya, who is reputed to have even drunk the whole ocean taking it in his palm. He arrived at the temple of Kalahasti where the Deity installed is an emblem (Linga) of Siva, who is overflowing with mercy, who is embraced by Uma, who is hymned and praised by Indra and other celestial beings, and who wears the crescent moon in his hair and the snake round his shoulder. He bathed in the river called Suvarnamukhi, worshipped Lord Siva with flowers of affection, mentally hymned on his glory and took leave of Him. Next, he went to the holy temple of Kanchi, which, according to the wise, offers the best means for overcoming the travails of Samsara. There he worshipped Ekamresa (Siva) and His Sakti, Kamakshi, who has taken Her abode in the sacred precincts to wait on His needs, as it were.

Next, he went to worship at the neighbouring temple of Kallalesa, who is Mahavishnu, the eternal Being and the Lord of Mahalakshmi. Then he proceeded to Pundarikapura where is located the temple of Adya-sakti as Parvati witnessing with admiration the dance of Sadasiva. Holy sages always see there, with their mental eye, the inspiring and attractive Tandava dance of Siva. Padmapada asked a devotee of Siva about the name and origin of a holy river in those regions, and he was told that, in answer to the prayer of some devotees, the Lord Siva commanded the divine river Ganga to spring up there. For that reason that holy river came to be known as Siva-ganga. People who bathe in it will get purified and can see the Tandava dance of Siva. There is also another version that Siva-ganga is the manifestation of the holy river in which Lord Siva submerged Himself and got relieved of the exhaustion caused by protracted dancing. Still other wise men are of the view that this holy stream was formed by drops of Ganga water overflowing from the matted locks of Siva, as His frame jerked in the course of the dance. Getting purified by repeated baths in these waters and always watching the holy image, a devotee attains to that purity of mind which enables him to see the Lord's dance in his mind. It is difficult to describe the merits acquired by one who bathes in these holy waters and adores the feet of Lord Siva in the temple there. Revolving thus in the mind, that great Sannyasin bathed in those holy waters, with his mind absorbed in the Lord, and then worshipped Him in the temple with great devotion. Next, he started on his journey to Rameswaram with great enthusiasm. On the way he reached the bank of the great river Kaveri. Sri Hari, whose abode is supposed to be the Milk Ocean, resides even in the holy waters of this river. After worshipping the feet of Mahavishnu, washed by the pure waters of the Kaveri, the daughter of the Sahya mountains, he resumed his journey to Rameswaram.

Padmapada at his Uncle's house: Comparative Merits of the Sannyasin and the Householder Ideals

(74-91) Travelling in this way southwards, he reached his native country where his uncle's home was situated. On seeing his nephew after so many years, his uncle, who was himself a scholar, was delighted beyond measure. Hearing that their dear Sanandana

(the old name of Padmapada) had arrived at his uncle's house, a number of his relatives came running to meet him with tears in their eyes. Some of them wept; others laughed out of joy; some others began to narrate incidents of his past life at home; and still others stood dumb in utter amazement, while a few expressed their feeling by prostrating themselves at his feet. The relatives began to exclaim in loud voice, "How long it is since we saw you! We look upon this as a rare privilege. But, it is very strange that you are not in the least reciprocating our feeling of joy. The state of a Sannyasin is, indeed, covetable—there are no relatives and children to worry him; he need not fear thieves; the kings and governments do not trouble him. It is, indeed, a state of complete peace and contentment. The birds and other creatures gather only round mature trees, bearing plenty of fruits. So also, poor men go to worry only the rich for favours. The burden of household management stands in the way of people getting even sound sleep. For them, where is adoration of the Deity? Where is pilgrimage? Where is holy association? From a Brahmana who had returned from distant countries, we had heard that you have become a Sannyasin. In seeing you today we have really had association with all that is holy. Birds come and settle down on trees that others have grown, and after a time they fly away. Even so, the Sannyasins go to the homes of others or to temples, stay for a while and then go away. Just as bees go from flower to flower and gather honey, the Sannyasin collects his food from the houses of others. For the Sannyasin, imbued with the spirit of renunciation, joy consists in the practice of self-control and other disciplines. Their disciples are their children. Their wife is union with the Self. Their home is their own body. In fact, a Sannyasin is possessed of everything required to make a man blessed. Desires have no limits. Fulfilment of one desire is followed by craving for something else. To get a wife one searches here and there. Next, he will be longing for a son. Poverty brings sufferings; frustration of one's desires brings still more poignant sufferings. In every way, suffering is the fate of a man whose heart is loaded with desires. Indeed, the fulfilment of human life lies in renunciation. Purity of mind is obtained through renunciation, and renunciation comes through association with the wise. It is in order to give opportunities to men for such association, that holy men like you go from

place to place. Established in the Atman, holy men, who are full of mercy to others, move about, appearing like senseless beings to an onlooker, eating whatever they get, and claiming no country or family as their own. For the good of the world they go to all holy places. Being devoid of all impurity on account of the knowledge of the Atman, they sanctify by their touch the tanks and the rivers of the holy places they visit. From their association, holy places receive their sanctity. O great one! Please be gracious enough to stay here for some days. The sight of you fills us with joy. At the same time, we are also filled with sorrow to think that one so non-attached like you is sure to go away from this place sooner or later. The life of the householder, which is ours, is verily like a miry field, very difficult to traverse. It is centre of miserliness and the fertile field of high-handedness, lying, cruelty, lasciviousness and greed. By your grace, purify us who are involved in such a state of life."

(92-106) To this, Sanandana said in reply: "It is the Lord's power that brings together and separates things, even up to the minutest atoms. Man must be prepared to see this process with equanimity, whether he likes it or not. Who can describe the merit of one who is able to relieve the sufferings of another approaching him at midday in the throes of hunger and thirst? It is the householder whom a Brahmacharin, equipped with the emblems of deer skin and staff, devoting his day for purificatory ablutions and Vedic study, approaches for the satisfaction of his hunger. How great is the merit of a householder who fulfils this obligation! After studying or discussing Vedantic themes and meditating on the Supreme Truth till midday, the Sannyasin, too, goes to the same householder in the noon, driven by the pinch of hunger. The Smriti says that the person who gives food to an ascetic observing spiritual disciplines, gets half the merits accruing to that ascetic by his vows and observances, by his pilgrimages and other pious observances, fraught with great difficulties. Without undergoing these trials and tribulations, the householder gains the same merit as the ascetic through their service. A wealthy householder is, indeed, a fortunate person. For, all people are sustained by wealth taken from him, in ways legitimate or illegitimate. Some obtain it from him through charity, some through love, some by theft, and some by exaction. It is said that all the gods are pleased with one

who pleases a holy man who is the master of the Vedas; for, according to the Vedas, all gods reside in such a personage. Good men, learned men, ascetics, social workers, pilgrims—all converge towards the homes of householders. As the householder is able to obtain all the merits of pilgrimages and of other disciplines, all the while staying at home, that very home becomes a holy place. Why should a wealthy and charitable person go out of his home anywhere to acquire merit? Not only that, even the beasts of the burrows in human habitations, depend on the householder for their food. I should, therefore, think his Ashrama is the highest in a sense. The body is the means with which all human ends are achieved, and the body, according to the Vedas, is said to be the product of the food consumed. Now it is the householder who produces the food required by a community and distributes the same. Thus the householder is like the heavenly Kalpataru which provides all the needs of people. Listen! I shall tell you more about these truths. Welcome people who come to your homes in a distressed state. Service of them leads to your uplift. Contrariwise, their neglect is fraught with very bad consequences. Perform the ritualistic duties laid down by the Vedas without desire for any fruits—even for the Lord's grace. Your minds will gradually get purified thereby. Even those who are deeply addicted to the pleasures of sex life will be cleansed of their sensuous tendencies if they become devoted to Sri Sankara."

The Fate of Padmapada's Exegesis

(107-116) After conversing in this way, Sanandana had his Bhiksha in his uncle's house. As he was taking food, his uncle saw with him a book of parchment leaves and asked him what it was about. Sanandana replied that it was a gloss on Sankara's great commentary on Vedanta Sutras. The uncle wanted to have a look into it. On reading it, while he was delighted with the extraordinary scholarship and intelligence displayed by his nephew in it, that delight was all but turned into hostility by certain apprehensions. It was the way in which he refuted the doctrines of other schools with powerful and unanswerable arguments that caused concern in the uncle's mind. He found that the teachings of Prabhakara, of which he was a follower, were specially refuted in his nephew's work. Though overcome with sectarian jealousy at these

powerful criticisms of his own school of thought, he nonetheless professed great appreciation for the work externally. Padmapada now said to him: "I am now going up to the Sethu. Let this book be in your safe keeping till I return. This book is my life. Just as you all love your homes and wealth, so do I cherish this book." With these words, he started towards Sethu with his followers, but immediately, he began to see various evil omens. Padmapada began to feel a trembling sensation simultaneously in his left eye, left arm and left leg. But without caring for these, he continued his journey. The uncle of Padmapada began to reflect: "When this book becomes public, the teachings of my Acharya Prabhakara will be adversely affected. For, the arguments raised in this are irrefutable. So the destruction of this book is necessary in the interests of our doctrine. It is better that one's house is burnt than that one's faith is destroyed. So I shall set fire to this house where this book is kept." Reflecting thus, that Brahmana set fire to his own house, and gave out that a fire accident had taken place. It is more sinful to spread unfounded rumours and scandals than to commit the misdeeds concerned. Hence let me hasten to add that the whole incident is a mere tradition that I have come across. I vouch no more for it.

The Greatness of Rameswaram

(117-137) Travelling to the South, Padmapada reached the Ashrama of Phulla-muni. It seems, it was there that Rama deposited his bow and sat underneath a banyan tree, revolving in his mind over the ways and means for taking his army of monkeys across the wide seas in order to rescue Sita from Lanka. As Rama was reflecting thus, he saw at a distance a celestial brilliance which was so attractive and bliss-giving that even the gods would long to experience it. The vision was closing in on him. When it reached within recognisable distance, Rama and others found in its centre a holy and adorable form, which proved to be that of Agastya, the pot-born sage, along with his consort. At the sight of Agastya all the dejection of Rama left him, as darkness disappears in the presence of the sun; for, such is the power of true holiness. After making ceremonial offerings, Rama prostrated himself before Agastya. It was followed by a few minutes of silence, because of the stirring of deep feelings within him. Then Rama began to speak

as follows: "Seeing you, I feel glad as on seeing my own father. Your presence has lifted me up from the mire of despondency. None in the solar dynasty had to face such adverse circumstances as myself. I had to leave my country with my wife. With Lakshmana, we then took our abode in the forest. I was deceived by the magical devices adopted by Maricha, to leave my wife alone, and taking that opportunity Ravana stealthily abducted her. It is said that she, who is naturally lean, is now living in the Asoka garden of Ravana, reduced to a mere skeleton. Please tell me how I can go across this ocean to Lanka with my army, destroy the wicked Ravana and rescue my wife. I have none but you as my well-wisher and guide." To this, the sage Agastya replied: "O Rama! Do not grieve. In the solar dynasty there have been many kings in times past who faced difficulties like this, and who, overcoming them, became once more restored to peace and prosperity. You are the greatest master of archery. Your brother Lakshmana and your ally Sugriva are unrivalled in bravery and military accomplishments. Never, never should you indulge in such selfpity. You are rich in friends and allies. For proper direction, I am also available. This ocean is no obstacle. It is only a puddle in the hoof-mark of a calf. As of old, I can dry the ocean by drinking its water, and you can then go across it to Lanka. But then, the credit for all that will go only to me. On the other hand, eternal fame will be yours if you build a causeway across the ocean to Lanka, march your army of monkeys over it, kill Ravana in battle, and rescue Sita." Then, as instructed by the sage, Rama's monkeys built the bridge with hillocks and rocks, and the armies marched to Lanka. After the slaughter of Ravana in battle, Sita was rescued. At that holy sea-shore known as Setu, where Rama built the bridge, Padmapada took his bath, adored Sri Rama and explained the traditions connected with the place to his followers, so as to develop the sentiment of devotion in them. One of his hearers thereupon asked him to explain the meaning of the word Rameswaram, the name by which that place is known. Padmapada explained it in three ways according to three Samasas or modes of compound-formation—Tatpurusha, Bahuvrihi and Karmadharaya. Interpreted in these three ways, the word would mean—'He who is the Lord of Rama (i.e., Siva)', if it is taken as Rama's statement; 'He to whom Rama is the Lord (i.e., Siva)', if taken as Siva's

speech; and 'Rama who is the Lord of all', if taken as the word of the Devas. All the scholars were very much pleased with this interpretation.

Padmapada's Disappointment

(138-152) After staying for a few days in that holy place, Padmapada began his return journey. Passing through many villages, he reached his uncle's place. Meeting him, the uncle said, "Alas! my house caught fire, and along with the house, the book also has been burnt. What can be done now!" Hearing this, Padmapada was at first very much grief-stricken, but soon recovered from the effect of it. In a consoling manner, the deceitful uncle said: "How unfortunate! In full trust, you kept the book here for safe custody. It has been destroyed by fire. I do not mind my house being burnt, but it is a tragedy that such a precious book has been lost!" To this Padmapada replied: "Let the book go. My intelligence, however is still intact, and I can produce it again." Resolving thus, Padmapada began to write that gloss anew. There is a story that observing the intelligence and memory power of his nephew, the uncle got afraid that he would be able to reproduce it without difficulty. It is said that in order to prevent this, the uncle added to his food some drug that had the effect of making the intellect dull, and Padmapada found it impossible to produce a book of a high standard like the one lost. Some of the junior co-disciples of Padmapada, who were also on pilgrimage, now happened to meet him at his uncle's place. Overwhelmed with joy at this meeting after a long period of separation, they prostrated themselves at his feet—the disciples, who had, by the grace of their teacher Sankara, attained to misery-destroying illumination, who had conquered all the passions of the heart, and who surpassed even Adisesha in their learning. From a pilgrim, whom they happened to meet there, they came to know about the whereabouts of their teacher Sankara. Realising that the best way of overcoming all their difficulties was to take shelter at the feet of their great teacher, they travelled to the Kerala country, the land of coconut palms, where the Acharya was then sojourning after he had done his duty towards his mother. Awaiting his disciples' arrival, he was staying at the temple of Vishnu at the place called Mahasurapura. He adored that Deity with the following hymn: "In utter sport, Thou createst this wonderful

world of the nature of consciousness-cum-inertness, through Maya which is neither real nor unreal. What purpose can the perfect person have in his actions? O Vishnu! It is Thou alone that art known as Aja (Brahma), Hari (Vishnu) and Hara (Siva). Assuming Thy Nature with its three aspects of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, Thou dost carry on the work of creation, preservation and dissolution of the universe. Just as the one sun makes many reflections in numerous puddles of water, so dost Thou assume numerous forms through numerous bodies."

(153-165) While the Acharya was adoring the Lord with such hymns, the disciples, eager to meet him after long separation, appeared before him and prostrated themselves at his feet. The Acharya tried to cheer them with wise exhortations. At the close of the discourse, Padmapada began to speak in faltering voice: "When I finished adoring Ranganatha and came out of the temple, my maternal uncle invited me endearingly to his house. He is a leader of the dualists. Remembering my relationship with him in my previous state of life, I wanted to bring him to accept the true philosophy by expounding to him your commentary. Wearing the armour of your exposition of the Vedic philosophy, I could easily silence the arguments of the Vaishnavas and refute the doctrines of the followers of Gautama. Protected by that mail of your teachings, studded with gems of cogent reasonings, no wound can disable me in conflict, be it with sword by the followers of Kanada, or be it with shafts by the followers of Gautama, or be it with staff by the followers of Kapila. Hiding his philosophical affiliation, my uncle pretended to love me externally as before and received me with great warmth. So I entrusted my gloss on your commentary to his custody. Then I started on my journey to Rameswaram. Afterwards I was told that my book together with the house where it was kept was burnt one night in an uncontrollable fire, which was as furious as the fire that comes out of Rudra'a third eye. But the people of that place say that in order to destroy my book, which supported an opposite school of phisolophy, my uncle burnt even the very house where he had kept the book, besides giving me some poison to dull my intellect and thus prevent the reproduction of the work, which he thought would have a fatal effect on the doctrines he professed. I feel even now that my brain has lost its original clarity and power. How is it that a servant of yours

should fall into such a miserable plight? O revered teacher! It is indeed a pity that a well-reasoned and powerful, yet easily understandable, gloss that I prepared on your great commentary should thus get lost in a wayside fire accident. However much I tried to reproduce it, all those subtle arguments that I had elaborated in it are not coming to my mind again. A person who looks up to your holy feet as his sole place of refuge, soon overcomes his miseries and becomes fit for the heavenly state. But alas! I am in this miserable plight. What could possibly be the reason for it? If it is any sin committed by me, may you be pleased to tell me what it is, as there is nothing beyond the comprehension of a teacher like you."

Sankara's Tremendous Memory

(166-175) The merciful Acharya now began to comfort his distressed disciple with the following highly enlightening and sweet words: "It is a pity that none can overcome the effects of Karma, even like the effect of a poison that has been consumed. I had foreseen these happenings and had spoken about them to Sureswara. While we were staying at Sringa-giri, you read out to me five chapters (Panchapadi) of your work. The memory of what I then heard has not been erased from my mind yet. I shall dictate it, and you may take it down." Thus, giving relief and protection like Mahavishnu Himself to his devotee, the great commentator repeated out of his memory the five chapters of that work Panchapadika in proper order. (So this incomplete work of Padmapada came to be known as *Panchapadika*.) This feat, though incredible and unheard of, is a trifle for that great world-teacher, the embodiment of all learning, the peerless among the wise, and a manifestation of the Supreme Being Himself. Padmapada took down the whole book as dictated by him, and on completion of it, wept and danced in ecstatic joy. During the Acharya's sojourn in Kerala, the ruler of that country, who was a poet and literary man of high attainment, and who had once met him in his early days in his home, went to see the Acharya and did obeisance to him by prostrating at his feet. The King had, on his earlier visit to the Acharya in his pre-monastic days, read out to him three dramas written by himself. Sankara now asked him what had become of those three dramas he had written. The king informed him that,

owing to his own carelessness, the manuscripts of those works had been burnt in fire. Immediately, the Acharya gave out all the three dramas from his memory, to the utter jubilation of the king, who now asked him what he could do for him in return. The Acharya said, "I cursed the Brahmanas of Kaladi that they will hereafter be not eligible for Vedic study. Enforce this rule on them." Even as Padmapada rejoiced at getting back his book, the ruler of Kerala, too, returned inundated with joy and became ever devoted to the Acharya.

CANTO 15

TRIUMPHANT TOUR OF THE LAND

Confrontation with Kapalikas in Karnataka

(1-23) Now Acharya Sankara, along with the king Sudhanva and a large number of disciples, started on a Dig-vijaya—a missionary tour for the propagation of the Advaita doctrine by controverting all philosophies opposed to it. He first travelled towards the Setu. On his way, he came across a sect whose followers were externally Saivas, but drank liquor in their worship like the Saktas. He entered into a very heated debate with these Brahmanas of Sakta persuasion, silenced them in argument for the good of the world, and made them accept the right code of rituals that he formulated. After worshipping Ramanatha at Rameswaram, the Acharya travelled through the Pandya and Chola countries and reached the city of Kanchi which shone like an ornament to the Hasti ranges. There he built a temple, instituted the worship of Devi, with rituals that are in accordance with the Vedic traditions and suited to the attainment of supreme knowledge. He eschewed, in those rituals, every trace of the Tantrika modes of worship.[1] Next, blessing the people of Andhra country and worshipping Lord Venkatanatha, he reached the land of Vidarbha. He was given a cordial reception by the king of that place. There, Padmapada and other disciples engaged themselves in controverting the perverse doctrines of the Bhairavas. After a time, the Acharya started towards the Karnataka country, but was warned by the king of Vidarbha that those regions were very dangerous, as they were full of Kapalikas who were followers of the cult of human sacrifice who condemned the Vedic religion and were, on the whole, a curse to humanity. They were not likely to tolerate the spread of the Acharya's influence in those regions. Hearing this warning,

[1] According to the traditions relied on by Anantanandagiri, Sankara came to Kanchi at the end of his spiritual mission and settled down there till his end. He either founded a new Devi temple there, or renovated and reformed the existing one, and helped the growth of the two blocks in that temple town, Siva Kanchi and Vishnu Kanchi, centred on the two deities of these names there. He also received large numbers of disputants and enquirers from Tamraparni and other parts of South India.

king Sudhanva, who was accompanying the Acharya on his travels, said, displaying his bow and arrows, that there was no danger from those brutish people so long as he was with the party. Thereupon the Acharya, along with his disciples, entered into the heart of this region of Kapalikas, with a view to controvert their vicious doctrines. He was soon opposed by Krakacha, the leader of the Kapalika cult. Krakacha's body was smeared all over with the ashes from the cremation ground, and in his hands were a skull and a trident, the emblems of his cult. Accompanied by several disciples similar to him in their make-up, Krakacha said in a tone replete with pride and audacity, "It is quite proper that you are wearing marks with ashes. But why are you having in your hand this ugly water pot of mud in place of the most sacred skull? And above all, why are you not adoring the great Kapali (Siva with a skull in hand)? Without the offering consisting of the red lotus of a bleeding skull and liquor, how can the Bhairava (Kapali), embraced by Uma, be pleased?" Thereupon king Sudhanva, who was accompanying the Acharya with his men, drove away Krakacha with the contemptuous words: "You wretch! Get away." With his lips quivering and eye-brows arching in anger, Krakacha declared, flourishing his battle axe, "I am not the famous Krakacha unless I reap a harvest of the heads of your fellows!" He then despatched a large band of well equipped Kapalikas, who approached the party with fierce and angry roars like a turbulent sea. The king put on his mail, and seated in his chariot, resisted the approaching Kapalika hoard with his bow and arrows. While this conflict was going on, Krakacha sent another batch of his followers to attack the party of Sankara's disciples and the entourage of devotees from the rear. Frightened by the sight of the Kapalika hoard, the members of the party immediately took shelter at the feet of the Acharya, their last resort. With the utterance of the mystic syllable 'Hung', the Acharya reduced to ash these terrible Kapalikas who were approaching the party with deadly weapons. Simultaneously, the king also spread the earth with a carpet formed of the heads of those Kapalikas who had come to attack at the front.

(24-29) Krakacha was much disconcerted to see that many of his own followers had been killed while the Sannyasins and their followers remained unhurt. So he now approached the Acharya

once again and said: "O infidel! See now my power, and suffer the consequences of your misdeeds.!" He then stood still with eyes closed, and a skull in hand. As he continued to meditate, the skull became full of liquor. He then drank half of it, and again continued to meditate on the Bhairava. Then there appeared before him the great Kapali (Bhairava) with a garland of skulls, long matted locks, and a trident in hand, bellowing out wild laughter and fierce roars. Addressing his deity, the Kapalika said, "O Lord! Destroy this persecutor of Thy devotees!" Then the great Kapali said: "Am I to destroy myself?" and with that question he cut off Krakacha's head. Then the Acharya sang a hymn in praise of the great Kapali, who forthwith disappeared from the sight of men. On the discomfiture of these sordid types of men, good folk everywhere praised the Acharya in great joy.

The Acharya at Gokarna

(30-39) Travelling through many lands and controverting the atheistic and corrupt doctrines of many sects, Sankara reached the shores of the western sea. The sea looked like a great opposing controversialist—its waves standing for gesticulating hands, and its loud sound, for noisy argument to the accompaniment of kettle drums. The all-forgiving Acharya left that place for Gokarna without entering into a controversy with that challenging sea, as if out of the feeling that the sea, an agitated, unsteady and watery being, had already been conquered by the Devas who churned it, and, therefore, needed no special attention from him. At Gokarna, he took his bath in the sea and worshipped at the shrine of Lord Siva there. Then, while the Acharya was preaching his philosophy to those who came to pay obeisance to him, a person named Haradatta went to his teacher Neelakantha, an upholder of Saivism, and said: "Revered Sir, a Sannyasin named Sankara, after having defeated famous scholars like Viswarupa, has now arrived at the temple along with his disciples. His idea is to defeat you also in argument and establish the supremacy of his doctrines." The great Saiva teacher, who had himself written, besides other works, a commentary on Vyasa's Sutras on the lines of Saivism, said at this: "He can never be an equal to me, be he capable of drinking up the sea, or rolling up the sky like a sheet of cloth, or plucking the disc of the sun from its wonted course. He will now see how

the brilliant rays of the fierce sun of my dialectics will dispel the darkness of ignorance that constitutes his doctrines." With these words, that master of Saiva doctrines, who had the marks of white ashes on his body and a shining necklace of Rudraksha beads round his neck, started in a challenging mood from his home with a retinue of disciples to meet Sankara. The Saiva doctrine that he tried to establish in opposition to Sankara's Vedanta philosophy was, in contrast with it, as antiquated as the earlier Samkhya doctrine in the face of the teachings of Badarayana.

The Saiva Neelakanta's Criticism of Advaita

(40-48) When the Saiva teacher approached for controversy, Sureswara came forward and restraining his teacher, said: "Lord! Leave him to me. I shall meet him in argument; and you will be the witness of my controversial skill." But Neelakanta turned towards Sankara himself, dismissing Sureswara with the words, "Friend, I know enough of your controversial skill. But I wish to have your teacher himself as my adversary." As the controversy started, Neelakanta found that his own doctrines were disappearing into nothingness before Sankara's criticism of them, and so leaving the defensive position, he started a direct attack on the Advaita doctrine. He said: "O ascetic! The meaning of *Tat tvaṁ asi* (That thou art) cannot be as you say, because Iswara and Jiva are by nature as different as light and darkness. The contention that they are non-different like the sun and its reflection cannot also hold good. That the sun and its reflection are two different entities, that the sun is a real entity and the reflection is a mere unsubstantial appearance, and that there can be no identity between a real entity and a mere passing show—has been established by our Acharya Vyomasiva and others. In your philosophy also, the reflected face is a mere appearance, as certified by an observer who sees both the face and its reflection. Next, there is your contention that the ignorance of the Jiva and the omniscience of Iswara are both alike the effects of Maya, and that if both these contrary attributes of the Jiva and Iswara are eliminated, there is only one Pure Consciousness underlying both alike. This contention is also meaningless. It is an established truth that the difference between two distinct entities cannot be sublated. In other words, they both have their identities. For example, there is no meaning

in saying that if 'horseness' and 'cowness' are eliminated, a common principle behind them is obtained. For, such elimination is not possible in the nature of things. If you accept this, you will also have to accept that the 'I' (i.e., the Jiva) is not Iswara. Each has its unsublatable identity. There are many such proofs to establish the difference between the Jiva and Iswara."

The Real Meaning of Identity of the Jiva and Iswara

(49-60) Thus, just as an elephant creates a stir in a lotus lake, he tried to shake the foundations of the Vedantic doctrine of non-duality. Having heard all his criticism, Sankara said: "I shall now tell you the real meaning of '*Tat tvam asi*' as understood according to the Vedantic tradition. It is true that there is a formal difference indicated by these words, *Tat* and *tvam*, as is the case with 'he' and 'man' in the sentence 'He is that man.' This is only in regard to the simple direct meaning of the word (*Vachyartha*). But, if the indirect and implied meaning (*lakshana*) is taken, there is identity in the purport of both the terms, the entity indicated by 'he' and 'that person' being identical. So also in *Tat tvam asi*, it is Pure Consciousness, the entity indicated by the indirect meaning of *Tvam*– an entity that is wrongly identified with body, mind, ego, etc. through super-imposition caused by Avidya– that is declared to be identical with the indirect meaning of the word 'That', namely, Pure Consciousness, which is the background on which Iswara is superimposed just as body, mind, ego, etc., are superimposed in the case of the Jiva. This is how the identity is to be understood and not in regard to the direct meanings– the insignificant limited individual and the omnipotent and omniscient Iswara. In the case of 'horse' and 'cow', which you have cited as example, there is no common indirect meaning to which they can refer. So by elimination of 'horseness' and 'cowness' no identical entity can be arrived at. Your example is, therefore, inappropriate. Besides, in the case of Jiva and Iswara, the ignorance of the former and the omniscience of the latter are both superimpositions on the non-dual Pure Consciousness. This Pure Consciousness is the implied meaning of both the superimpositions of the Jivahood and Iswarahood. The body, mind, intellect and other entities that constitute the personality of man—all belong to the realm of objectivity, and are, therefore, by nature insentient. If these are eliminated

from the Jiva, one arrives at the real nature of the Jiva. In the same way, this objective, phenomenal world is a superimposition, just as a snake is on a rope; and when the superimposed nature of the world is seen and its basis arrived at, the true nature of Iswara, too, is understood. The adjuncts of both the Jiva and Iswara—ignorance and littleness in the case of Jiva, and omniscience and all-mightiness in the case of Iswara—do not actually inhere in their substratum, Pure Consciousness. Due to proximity, they are only reflected in it, just as the colour of a flower is in a crystal. The substratum is never affected by the adjuncts. It is ever pure and untainted. Unless difference were unreal, Sruti could not have condemned in such statements as: "From death to death he goes who perceives reality here as many." It would not also have said, "He who sees even a little difference here, is overcome by fear." Conversely, if non-difference were unreal, the Veda would not have declared its realisation to be the acme of human attainment, in sentences like, "For him who sees unity, where is infatuation, where is sorrow?" The ordinary direct experience which man has of himself as a small and imperfect being is as incorrect as the immediate apprehension he has of the moon as a limited disc of six inches diameter. Just as in the above case, this immediate apprehension, being a mere attribution, does not affect the real size and nature of the moon, so also, the real nature of Reality as non-dual and perfect is not affected by man's ordinary ignorant apprehension to the contrary. What further proof do you require for the teaching that duality is sublated by the apprehension of Non-duality?"

(61-72) At this stage, Neelakantha intervened and said: "Great sages like Kapila and others have described the Supreme Reality and the supreme end of man in terms of duality. How can your contention that it is unity, stand against the view of sages?" To this, Sankara replied: "Before the clear statement of the Sruti, statements contrary to it found in Smritis are ineffective. So, if a Rishi's teaching is contrary to the teaching of the Veda, the former becomes unacceptable." Neelakantha again objected: "My position is that the statements of the Rishis, whenever they are true to experience and reasoning, are equal to Vedic statements and are, therefore, acceptable. Our experience shows that in each body, it is a separate spirit that experiences joy and sorrow. If difference

is not true, there will be mutual juxtaposition of the distress of a suffering man and the enjoyment of a king. In other words, how these two have contrary experiences cannot be explained. The diversity of experiences in different bodies, say of a king and a beggar, becomes inexplicable if the spirit in them all is one. Agency can accrue only to a sentient self. Nothing insentient can experience itself to be an agent. Enjoyership should also accrue to the same one as the agent. To contend otherwise is to be irrelevant. Again, Mukti means the termination of all sorrows and not a state of happiness. For, sorrow always goes with happiness like a shadow. So, just like food mixed with poison, a Mukti that is a state of happiness is reprehensible". To this, Sankara replied: "The differences between happiness and misery are certain imaginary modes or states of mind. They do not pertain to the Atman, nor do they indicate multiplicity of the Atman. They indicate only several mental modes, the difference being only in the adjuncts through which the one Atman manifests. Though the body-mind combination is inert in itself, when consciousness is associated with it, it gets the sense of agency. Because in grass and similar entities there is no association of consciousness, they have no sense of agency also. The contention that happiness and sorrow go together, is no doubt applicable to happiness born of sense contacts. It has no relevancy in the bliss of Brahman, which is non-contactual. The attainment of it is the highest object of human life, and not the mere eradication of some sorrows." With such powerful arguments, logical, meaningful and based on Vedic authority, the Acharya refuted the doctrines of the Saiva and established the supremacy of the Vedanta philosophy. Thus defeated, Neelakantha abandoned his own commentary along with his pride, and became a disciple of the Acharya with all his followers like Haradatta. Hearing that Neelakantha was defeated by the great Sannyasin, Udayana and other dualists lost nerve and felt their position very shaky.

The Acharya at Dwaraka and at Ujjayini

(73-75) The Acharya and his disciples next travelled through Saurashtra and adjacent countries, and at last reached the city of Dwaraka. That place was full of Vaishnavas who bore the seal marks of Vishnu's emblems like Sankha, Chakra, etc. on their

arms, big upright paintings on their forehead and Tulasi leaves on their ears. They held the doctrine that salvation is obtained by the recognition of the five differences—those between God and Jiva, between Jiva and Jiva, between Jiva and insentient objects, between God and insentient objects, and between insentient objects themselves. Hundreds of them came forward for controversy and were defeated by the disciples of the Acharya.

(76-88) The divine Sankara, after having defeated in arguments the sects of Vaishnavas, Saivas, Saktas and Sauras, now proceeded to the city of Ujjayini. To their great joy, the party heard the loud sound of Mridanga, announcing that the worship of Lord Siva was going on in the great temple of the city. A mild wind, carrying the sweet smell of flowers and the fragrant smoke of sandal wood dust and incense, was blowing there, removing the pilgrims' physical exhaustion. The Acharya then proceeded to the great temple to adore the Deity, Maha Kala. The worship over, the illustrious Sankara, the adored of all the great sages, and the repository of great majesty and power, sat in the temple portico with his disciples. He called his disciple Padmapada to his side, and said: "Here there is a great scholar named Bhatta Bhaskara. Find him out and inform him of our presence here." Bhatta Bhaskara was considered a prince among scholars. He was the author of many works and a victor in numerous debates. Meeting him, Padmapada said: "Here has arrived the Yogi Sankara of worldwide reputation who has been going all over the country, defeating scholars of opposite schools and spreading the philosophy of Non-dualism. Refuting the interpretations of all other schools of thought, he has now made a commentary on Vyasa's Vedanta Sutras. I came here to carry this information to you. In that commentary, he has refuted your unsound doctrines also. You may, therefore, abandon your false doctrines and adopt the non-dualistic philosophy." Somewhat annoyed at this belittling speech, the reputed scholar, Bhatta Bhaskara, replied thus: "As a swan swallows the tender stalk of lotus and performs its dance, I have been eating up the reputation of other scholars and dancing on the pinnacle of scholarship. Perhaps your teacher has not yet heard of me who has torn to shreds the false teachings of many sects. Before my teachings, even the lustre of the words of Kanada, the teacher of the Nyaya-Vaiseshika system, fades like that of the

moon before the sun. Kapila's teachings also have run away and taken refuge in some unknown place before the attacks of my dialectics. When this is the case with these reputed ancient teachers, what can modern teachers, mere pigmies before me, do?" Padmapada thereupon said: "Sir, do not indulge in such meaningless speech. With a stone chisel, it may be possible to cut the rocky side of a hill, but it will be of no avail to cut a piece of diamond!"

Controversy with Bhatta Bhaskara

(89-138) Padmapada then returned to his teacher and acquainted him with all that had happened. Just then Bhatta Bhaskara also arrived, and he entered into arguments with Sankara on philosophical and theological doctrines. Quoting many authors, each was bent on defeating the other. That controversy was unique for the subtlety of arguments employed, for the skill evinced in refuting the thesis of the opponent, and for the splendid eloquence and mastery of language they displayed. None could know in the least, on what side victory lay. Gradually, before the moonlight of Sankara's dialectics, the lotus of Bhatta's intellect began to shrink and close, and at last he fell into a confused state of mind. Finding it difficult to defend his own thesis and desirous of avoiding utter defeat, Bhatta Bhaskara started an attack on the doctrine of Non-dualism, the light of Vedic wisdom. He said: "Your position is that it is Prakriti or Maya that causes the distinction between Iswara and the Jiva. Now, Prakriti must be resting either on Iswara or Jiva, and this will require the pre-existence of the distinction between them."

The Locus of Avidya and Pre-existence of the Jiva

SANKARA: "No. Prakriti can create the distinction between Jiva and Iswara resting on Pure Consciousness, wherein there is no such distinction. Take the example of the mirror which causes the distinction between an object and its image. No image exists before the mirror is held before the object. The image only succeeds, and not precedes, the mirror. Thus, Prakriti can be said to be of Pure Consciousness without there being the Jiva. Hence the pre-existence of the distinction between Iswara and Jiva is not necessary for accepting Prakriti as the common Upadhi of both. Though Prakriti is an Upadhi (adjunct of Brahman), it does not

affect Brahman, just as the mirror does not affect the object. The image, however, is affected by the adjunct, the mirror. So also is Jiva, the image of Brahman, in the reflecting adjunct of Prakriti."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "It is irrational to say that Prakriti, which is inert and of the nature of ignorance, has got its locus in Brahman who is Pure Consciousness. For, how can Pure Consciousness and pure unconsciousness co-exist in one and the same entity? So it must have its locus only in Jiva who is ignorant."

SANKARA: "Do not conclude like that. The fact is otherwise. There is no authority to support the view that Prakriti has its locus in the Jiva, who is qualified by the internal organ (mind)."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "In individuals, there is the feeling 'I am ignorant'. This direct experience is itself the authority for the thesis that the Jiva, qualified by Antahkarana (mind), is the locus of Prakriti."

SANKARA: "If what you pointed out is the authority, the knowledge 'I am a self-conscious being' has also to be attributed to the unconscious entity Antahkarana. How can unconsciousness give the sense of self-consciousness?"

BHATTA BHASKARA: "It can be explained like this. A piece of iron, though cold, becomes red-hot in the proximity of fire. Just like that, the unconscious entity, the Antahkarana, appears to be a conscious entity by the association of Pure Consciousness."

SANKARA: "If this is granted, it will also have to be granted that the feeling, 'I am ignorant' is also not a result of Prakriti associating with the internal organ, but with Pure Consciousness. For Pure Consciousness permeates both alike."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "As the insentient Antahkarana (mind) and the sentient consciousness are contradictories, we cannot say that self-consciousness is a product of Antahkarana, but consciousness can be superimposed on it by Pure Consciousness. As both Antahkarana and Prakriti are insentient, it can be said that Prakriti (Ignorance) is dependent on Antahkarana."

SANKARA: "Then this defect arises: Your statement would make Antahkarana, which is itself a product of Prakriti, the object

on which Prakriti (Ignorance) depends. Further, if this Ignorance (Prakriti) is dependent on the mind, it must be present in deep sleep also. But, we have no such experience in deep sleep as 'I am ignorant'. Such a feeling is not present in deep sleep. So, there is no proof to show that Prakriti depends on the mind. Its base must only be Pure Consciousness."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "In Sushupti (deep sleep), Ignorance is nowhere. To say that it is therefore in Pure Consciousness is meaningless. In the Sruti, it is said that, in Sushupti, the Jiva attains oneness with Pure Consciousness: *Satā saumya tadā sampanno bhavati, svayamapīto bhavati.* Then there is no question of Maya (Ignorance, Prakriti)."

SANKARA: "In the Veda it is only said that having gained unity with Brahman, they do not know anything: *sati sampadya na viduḥ*. By saying 'they do not know', it is implied that it exists in Sushupti, only one has no awareness of it."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "The Sruti you have quoted only asserts unity, but is not an admission of persisting Ignorance. On the other hand, it is an authority for the contention that, in deep sleep, there is no Ignorance (Maya)."

SANKARA: "The Vedic sentence '*sati sampadya na viduḥ*' (attaining the Paramatman, man knows nothing), asserts only that, in sleep, men do not know about the presence of Ajnana (Ignorance). This implies that Ajnana is existing."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "'Knows nothing' only emphasises the unity. It is not an admission that Ignorance persists. Besides, if Ignorance is located in Pure Consciousness, is it permanently located or only temporarily? It cannot be permanent, because it is inconceivable how eternal Consciousness and eternal Ignorance could co-exist. Temporary presence of Ignorance in Pure Consciousness cannot also be accepted, because there is no agency to remove its presence in Pure Consciousness. Immediately you say 'Ignorance exists in Pure Consciousness', it means it is irremovably present there. What the light of Pure Consciousness cannot eradicate, cannot certainly be eradicated by any unconscious principle. Viewed in this light, Ignorance must be conceived as existing in all

states without any means of eradicating it. This is unacceptable. So Ignorance, whether you call it permanent or temporary, cannot be located in Pure Consciousness. Then, the question will come—what is the cause of Samsara? One will have to reply that it is the mind's tendency to grasp things in a contrary way, and its proneness to illusory perception (Bhrama)."

SANKARA: "Then, please define *Bhrama* or illusory perception."

BHATTA BHASKARA: " 'I am a man, not Iswara'—this is *Bhrama* or illusory perception; 'I am Brahman' is *Prama* or valid knowledge."

SANKARA: "You who say that the perception 'I am a man and not Brahman's is illusory, have forgotten the fundamental doctrines of your Bhedabheda (Identity-cum-difference)—a doctrine which admits of admixture of identity and difference in all entities and, therefore, accepts the reality of everything. In such a theory, how can there be any *Bhrama* or unreal perception? For example, you say that the perception 'I see a cow with broken horns' is true. How can you then deny reality to the universally felt perception 'I am an ignorant man.' Reasoning also leads to the same. 'I am the man I perceive myself to be' is the conclusion. The reason for this is that identity and difference co-exist. The illustration is the perception of a cow with broken horns."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "A different inference is possible. The proposition is: The perception 'I am a man' is not true. The reason for this is: 'I am Brahman, and not man'. The illustration is that in the illusory perception, when corrected, the object seen is found to be nacre and not silver, the silver being a false perception."

SANKARA: "Even this interpretation will not suit your philosophy which takes all perceptions as real. Take the perception, 'This is not a cow with broken horn, but a hornless cow'. Even when you arrive at this conclusion, the first notion of it as a cow with broken horn remains. For, all perceptions are real for you. So, even when the preception that it is a hornless cow arises, the first perception remains, and you cannot have any settled conclusion about anything."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "When a perception 'This is such and

such a thing' is found incorrect and is corrected by this later perception, the first perception is *Bhrama* or illusory perception. Such is my view and not as you put it."

SANKARA: "Even this will not help you. Because, according to your philosophy, the first perception 'This is a cow with broken horn' is as much true as the second perception, 'This is a hornless cow.' When both these perceptions are real, how can the idea of *Bhrama* or false perception arise at all? How can you have a settled conviction?"

BHATTA BHASKARA: "My statement is not inconsistent or without sufficient reason. In the statement about 'a cow with broken horn,' 'broken horn' is not denied in the perception of the cow, but in the next perception of the cow as hornless. When that perception comes, the earlier one goes and the settled conviction that the cow is hornless arises. Where is inconsistency in this?"

SANKARA: "Your reasoning is certainly uncertain. Is your denial of 'broken horn' in mere 'hornlessness', or in 'a cow that is hornless?' It cannot be in the former, because the very perception of a mere 'broken horn' in more 'hornlessness' is impossible. The irrelevance consists in the fact that, for the perception of a 'broken horn', mere 'hornlessness' can never be the cause. The second alternative also cannot hold good. As soon as denial is made of 'hornlessness' pertaining to the cow, that denial applies immediately to the cow in which the qualification of 'hornlessness' inheres and vice versa. So, you do not see 'broken horns' and 'hornlessness', as separate from the cow. You have, therefore, two perceptions—first the cow with broken horn and next the hornless cow. According to your philosophy, both these perceptions are equally real, and so it is confused and inconclusive reasoning."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "What we say in our system of thought is this: Even after it is settled that an animal is a hornless cow, still the idea of, or the proposition about, the cow with broken horn stands."

Salvation is Impossible in Identity-in-difference

SANKARA: "So also, according to your philosophy, if all percep-

tions are real, the experience 'I am a man' must persist even if the consciousness 'I am Brahman' arises. For, both are real."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "The Sruti says: 'When one experiences everything as Atman, who sees whom?' So, when by such Vedic sentences one realises the self as Brahman, the experience 'I am a man' cannot stand. How can you say that such experience stands?"

SANKARA: "According to your philosophy, such a question as is posed by the Sruti cannot arise, as it goes against your assumption that both difference and unity are real. It is relevant only in our philosophy, and when you put this question, you are only slipping into our system of thought. In our system of thought, it is the absence of knowledge of Supreme Brahman that is the cause of ignorance and the consequent perception of the many. When the knowledge of Brahman arises, the world of multiplicity born of ignorance is dissolved. There is no question of the 'many' when the Absolute is realised. But, your system of Bhedābheda maintains that the world of the 'many' is real. So, its effacement, including your sense of individuality, is not possible."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "In our system identity-in-difference is asserted only of five pairs of opposites. These are: species and individual; attribute and substance; cause and effect; qualification and the qualified; part and whole. We do not maintain that there is identity-in-difference between body and spirit. So, your objection will not hold good here. The dawn of identity of the spirit with Brahman can efface the sense of identity with the body."

SANKARA: "Is identity-in-difference applicable to all these five pairs of opposites together, or to each pair separately? It cannot be the first because all those five pairs of opposites of diverse kind cannot occur together. If it is in each of the pairs, then it must occur, according to your doctrine, in the pairs of opposites you describe as part and whole (Anga and Angi). Body and spirit are 'Anga and Angi' in your system, and so, identity-in-difference holds good in regard to them, and the feeling 'I am an embodied being' can never disappear. Further, if you ever maintain that identity-in-difference holds good only with one of the five, namely, cause and effect, then, since spirit and body have that relation, identity-in-difference must hold good in regard to them also viewed in this way."

Bhrama and Prama cannot be distinguished in Identity-in-difference

BHATTA BHASKARA: "Body is an effect produced by Iswara and not by the Jiva."

SANKARA: "As you admit Jiva and Iswara are identical, to be the effect of one is to be the effect of the other also. In your doctrine, where even false perception (*Bhrama*) is equated with *Prama* (right knowledge)—when the false and the true are not clearly distinguished—the very use of the word *Bhrama* is irrelevant and out of place. For even *Bhrama* is *Prama* for you. So, you can never say that Samsara (worldly existence) is due to *Bhrama* or false identification. Now to show your inconsistency further, I ask the question—whose is this *Bhrama* according to you? Is it of the Antahkarana (mind) or of Pure Consciousness? It cannot be of Antahkarana, because it is the Consciousness (i.e., the self) that experiences *Bhrama*. If Antahkarana is what is affected, the self cannot be involved."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "By association with a red flower, a crystal can look red. In the same way, because of association with an Antahkarana that is affected by *Bhrama*, the Self or Consciousness also appears to be under *Bhrama*. By this, I do not admit that Consciousness is altered into the *Bhrama* state."

SANKARA: "If that is so, what is the nature of the relation of the *Bhrama* based on Antahkarana with the Self? Is it a real or a false relation? It cannot be the first, because in your philosophy, the association of the quality of one substance with another is not real. So the Self and *Bhrama* cannot be related in a real sense. But at the same time, as the experience of *Bhrama* is immediate and direct, the relation cannot be called unreal also. In this way, the contention that *Bhrama* is an off-shoot of Antahkarana is refuted. Now if you are going to contend that *Bhrama* is an off-shoot of the Self (Atman), that too is unacceptable. How can the Atman, who is accepted as partless and unaffected, change into any effect? If at all it changes, that change can only be of the nature of Pure Consciousness, and not of *Bhrama*. Atman is eternal and is of the nature of Pure Consciousness, and no *Bhrama*, which is of the nature of awareness of unreal things, can occur to it. Two contradictory qualities of being—of the nature of Pure

Consciousness, and of being possessed of illusory consciousness—cannot co-exist in the Self."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "Chit or Pure Consciousness is not a quality. It is substance, the very Self itself. So, your objection cannot hold good as far as Chit is concerned."

SANKARA: "Still it cannot have the transformation of *Bhrama* (illusory knowledge). A quantity of gold made into the ornament called Kataka can be the base for only that ornament at a time, and not also for another called *Ruchaka* at the same time. So also the Atman, which is eternally of the nature of knowledge, cannot be of the nature of ignorance also at the same time."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "If the word *Bhrama* is not suited, let us leave it and say the tendency for false perception (*Bhrama-samskara*), or incapacity to grasp the truth, is the cause of Samsara."

SANKARA: "If there is no *Bhrama* at all, how can there be *Bhrama-samskara* or tendency for false perception (*Bhrama*) and incapacity to grasp the truth? All these are only aspects of *Bhrama*. As for non-perception, since Chit (Pure Consciousness) is eternal, its non-perception by itself is inconceivable. If it is the absence of mental modification that is meant by non-perception, the luminous Self shines even then."

BHATTA BHASKARA: "If this is the position, there is no way of overcoming the sense of ignorance, suffering and falsity in which the Jiva finds himself."

SANKARA: "Not so. It can be done by the unmodified mental mode apprehending the unity of the Jiva and Iswara generated by the Upanishadic sentences like 'Thou art That'. But, if your doctrine of Bhedabheda, characterised by the equal validity of both unity and difference, is accepted, a confusing situation would arise, which would make both life in the world and life of abandonment impossible."

(139-155) In this way, by his brilliant arguments, Sankara, the divine sage, silenced even that great scholar Bhatta Bhaskara and put down the dominance of doctrines contrary to the teachings of the Vedas. The glory of Sankara's life and teachings spread everywhere in the world like the light of the moon in a sky that

has been cleared of all clouds with the onset of the spring season. Great scholars of Avanti like Bana, Mayura and Dandin abandoned their perverse doctrines and became devoted to the study of Sankara's commentaries.

Controversy with the Jainas

When the Acharya was teaching his commentaries to disciples in the land called Bahlika, a group of Jainas, intolerent of these teachings, went to challenge him for debate.

The Jainas asked: "Why don't you accept the seven categories of Jainism— namely, soul, lifeless objects, sense attraction, sense control, austerity, bondage and liberation, as also our Syad-Vada or seven-pronged statement of the nature of reality?"

SANKARA: "What is the Jiva like in the religion of the Jainas?"

JAINA: "The Jiva is of the size of the body bound by the eight forms of Karma."

SANKARA: "A thing that is neither atomic, nor all-pervasive, but is of the size of the body, will be perishable like a pot. In transmigration, how can such a Jiva occupy bodies of vastly varying sizes like that of a man, an elephant, or a fly."

JAINA: "When it enters a big body, more souls combine together; and when it enters a small one, many go apart."

SANKARA: "If the soul also grows and shrinks, originates and perishes like the body, it must belong to the category of non-self. How does it originate after death and how does it spread in the body?"

JAINA: "Souls are without origination and destruction. They unite with the body and separate from it. Their size changes according to the size of the body."

SANKARA: "Tell me whether these Jivas are insentient or sentient. If insentient, they will not be able to move the body. If there are several sentient entities, they will pull the body in diverse directions owning to mutual antagonism, and the body itself may perish under their pulls and counter-pulls."

JAINA: "If one chariot may be drawn by several horses, why should not several Jivas function in a unified manner in a single body?"

SANKARA: "O friend! The chariot has one driver to control and direct the horses. Here in the body, there is none, according to your theory, to fulfil this function of co-ordination."

JAINA: "It is not that the souls come and go. In big bodies they grow big, and in small bodies they contract. The leeches provide an example for this."

SANKARA: "If the souls are then subject to change, they must be perishable. If the soul thus perishes, even new embodiments become impossible, not to speak of salvation. It can only float about in the ocean of Samsara like the shell of a gourd carrying the load of Karma. In the same way, your seven-pronged description of reality is also a silly doctrine, as contradictions like existence, non-existence, etc., cannot co-exist in one and the same entity."

Defeat of Navagupta and Others

(156-162) Thus, he humbled the pride of the Jaina sect known as Madhyamikas and propagated his commentary in the country of Surasena. Afterwards, he had triumphal propaganda tours through the lands of Darada, Bharata, Kuru, Panchala and others. By his powerful dialectics he became victorious over (the followers of) Guru Prabhakara (the founder of the Mimamsa school), Bhatta (the follower of another Mimamsa school), Udayana (a leader of the Nyaya school), Khandanakara (the famous dialectician, Harsha) and others. Then he went to Kamarupa where he won victories over Navagupta, a leading thinker of the Sakta school and a commentator on the Vyasa Sutras from the point of view of that school. Navagupta now reflected in his mind thus: "He is like a sun to the lotus of the Vedas. Under his warmth, that lotus will bloom and our school will perish. In all the worlds, there is none equal to him in intelligence and learning. He must, therefore, be put down somehow. I shall do this through black magic." Plotting thus with his disciples, he abandoned his hitherto professed cult because of fear of public criticism, and followed the Acharya, pretending to have become a disciple of his. The Acharya finished his preaching

in the northern region, and then proceeded through the lands of Kosala, Anga, etc. to Gauda. In Gauda he won over scholars like Murari Misra and Udayana, and triumphed over Dharmagupta. His fame was, thus, firmly established in those regions.

Panegyric of Sankara

(163-174) Bhaskara had defeated and converted large numbers of Brahmanas who had broken away from the Vedic path, influenced by the deceptive teachings of the Bauddhas. Even such renowned scholars were humbled by the great Acharya and, thus, brought to accept the Advaita doctrine, for which the Vedas stand. Thus, he uprooted all perverse sects. Various misleading sectaries like Saktas, Pasupatas, Kshapanakas, Kapalikas and Vaishnavas had inflicted wounds on the body of Vedic religion by their perverse interpretations. It was to save the true spirit of the Vedas from destructive encroachments that he took to the path of fierce polemics and not for gaining renown as a great dialectician. For, the crocodile of craze for renown can never devour an omniscient one like him. The highway of Advaita, laid first by the four-faced Brahma, trodden by his sons Sanaka and the other Kumaras, and maintained carefully by sages like Valmiki, was, in course of time covered with thorny shrubs of dualistic pseudo-religions, which the Acharya cleared, so that seekers of liberation could tread that path in safety and with ease. Just as the 'six mothers' brought up Shanmukha tenderly with all attention, so did the great spiritual and ethical virtues like peace, forbearance, renunciation and others foster the growth of Sankara. And, just as Shanmukha liberated the Devas from the fear of Taraka and his hosts, Sankara destroyed the tribe of vociferous atheists feeding and fattening themselves on all kinds of filthy doctrines, and saved the true spiritual seekers from their oppressive fear. No sooner was his bugle sounded, than the atheistic Charvakas took to their heels; the followers of Kanada lost sight of their way in the cloud of dust they raised; and, so also, the Sankhyas and the followers of Patanjali ran helter-skelter, abandoning their spirit of confrontation. For, who on earth or heaven can stand in a battle of disputation before that mighty intellect and tower of spiritual strength? The resounding drum-beat announcing the Acharya's victory over Mandana had blown like a fierce wind

through the forest of the ears of numerous atheistical sophists, and then lit up a conflagration that became a fierce and roaring forest fire, cosuming all the wild growth of perverse doctrines therein. The Buddhists ran away pell-mell when confronted by him in controversy; the followers of Kanada took shelter in obscure corners; the disciples of Gautama dissolved in darkness; the sect of Kapila lost all its glamour; and the followers of Patanjali surrendered to him with hands in salutation. In all the three worlds, who is there that can equal Sankara, the emperor of the spiritual realm? Some of his controversial antagonists like the followers of Kanada, whose philosophy accepts the Vedas, came to his way of thinking and ended with a friendly shake of hands, while others like the atheistical Charvakas sustained disastrous defeat and disappeared from the philosophical arena. All the followers of the Vedas joined his ranks and became devoted followers of the path leading to Brahman proclaimed in the Upanishads. Ah! Wonderful are both the power and the mercy of this prince among the Sannyasins! A veritable flame of Badavanala (submarine fire) to the ocean of peace and other spiritual excellences; a fierce wind threatening to scatter the clouds of truth; a fire burning up the tree of faith; the fourteenth day of the black fortnight for the moonlight of kindliness; a full moon night to the lotus of forbearance; and a rainy season to the swan of virtue—such was the nature of the vicious sophistries which met with their doom at the hands of this 'king of staff-holders' (Dandiswara, Dandi being another term for Sannyasin having the staff as his emblem). A mass of rain clouds showering the ambrosial downpour of Advaitic thought, the activities of this supreme teacher put an end to the spiritual famine caused by the misdeeds of Buddhist Bhikshus and the fierce summer heart radiating from the atheistic doctrines preached by some other sectaries. The Acharya's dialectics crushed the new sprouts of atheism put forth by the Jaina sect of Digambaras, who are the servants of the Patanjala sect, the spittoon-holders for the Kapalikas, the gate-keepers of the sect of Kanada, and the orchestra for the king of Kshapanakas. Thus, through the teachings of the genuine philosophy augmented by his spiritual lustre, this holy personage, Sri Sankara, plastered all forms of dualistic doctrines, erased all doubts and disbelief and removed the darkness of ignorance from the minds of men.

CANTO 16

ACCESSION TO SARADAPITHA

Navagupta's Black Magic

(1-8) Navagupta, the master of black magic, was, as stated before, planning, ever since his defeat at the hands of Sankara, to bring about his death by black magic. By Abhichara (a form of black magic) this evil one produced in the body of the Acharya a rectal fistula of an incurable nature. The disciple Totaka always nursed his teacher and washed and cleansed his cloth stained with blood and faecal matter that flowed through the fistula, which yielded to no treatment. One day, all the disciples together represented to their sick Master thus: "The occurrence of a disease cannot perhaps be prevented altogether; but if it is not arrested by treatment, it will grow into menacing proportions like an unchecked enemy. As you have no identification with the body, you may not be very mindful of these developments. But we, who see all your sufferings, are all extremely griefstricken. There are many expert physicians who can diagnose the nature of the disease and administer efficient treatment. Let us find out a proper physician to do the necessary treatment for you. The Sastras say that even if a teacher is careless about his bodily comforts owing to his indifference to the body, nonetheless, it is the obligation of dutiful disciples to do everything to relieve him and look after his comforts. Your happiness is our happiness. Your feet are our only support in life. We are, therefore, very much concerned for your recovery from these sufferings."

(9-13) To this, Sankara replied: "Diseases are the results of the sins of the past. Only through these sufferings are such sins destroyed, so say the Sastras. Enlightened men say that there are two kinds of ailments— those caused by Karma and those that are of purely physical origin. The first type will be cured only with the exhaustion of Karma causing them. The second type is amenable to treatment. I do not want to be treated. Let this last till the Karma is exhausted. In the meanwhile, even if the body perishes, let it perish. I do not care a bit for it." The disciples thereupon said: "It is true that you have no desire for the survival of your body. But we, your disciples, desire that you should be

in our midst as long as possible. Because, our very life is dependent on yours, just as aquatic creatures depend for their life on the water in which they live. Great men keep up their body for the good of others, though they have nothing to achieve for themselves with the body. O great one! Your body, too, has to be preserved for the sake of the world at large."

(14-32) The Acharya agreed to take medical treatment at these repeated and earnest requests of the disciples, who, thereupon, went in all directions in search of competent physicians. Generally the best physicians are to be found attached to the palaces of kings, as service under kings assures them of a high income. The disciples, therefore, went to the palaces of neighbouring rulers and at last managed to find out some competent physicians. The physicians demanded their fee first, and delighted on receiving it, promised to do all that was in their power to cure the ailment. The Acharya said to them: "My disease, located in the region of the anus, is afflicting my whole body. You physicians, who are to diseases what the sun is to darkness, may do what you think fit to relieve these conditions. Considering diseases and the sufferings they cause as atonement for the sins of the past, I showed no interest in treatment till now. But under the pressure of these disciples of mine, I have sought your help." The physicians then treated the case as best as they could, but with no effect. To them, who were very much disappointed at the failure of their efforts, the Acharya said one day: "You have been spending many days here for my treatment. It is proper that you go home now. Your relatives and dependents must be eagerly awaiting your return. Besides, your master, the king, may also get annoyed if he knows you have gone for practice elsewhere. If he is displeased, he will dismiss you from his service and appoint others in your place. Kings are as restless as horses, and to disobey their orders is to court dismissal. Good physicians are very few, but patients are in great abundance. So many patients, afflicted by various ailments, must every day be visiting your homes and returning disappointed on not meeting you. A man has his origin in his father. But, it is the physician who protects him when attacked by ailments. Often, a life has a premature end if a physician is not available. To all embodied beings, a physician is what Mahavishnu, the protector, is to the universe." The physicians replied: "All that you say is

correct. Still, we are reluctant to leave this place. Will any intelligent man go to inhabit the lower worlds, leaving the heavenly regions of the gods?" With these words, the physicians, though quite competent in their profession, departed in deep sorrow on account of their failure to effect a cure. And the great teacher, for his part, continued to put up with all the sufferings, giving up all attachment to the body. As the disease was only increasing, in spite of the treatment given by celebrated physicians, the Acharya meditated on Lord Siva with a view to understand the mystery behind his ailment. Thereupon, commissioned by the Lord, the Aswins, with long blue eyes and holding a book in hand, appeared before him in the form of Brahmanas and said, "O great Sannyasin! There is no treatment for this ailment. It has been produced in you by another man by black magic." Padmapada was terribly angry on knowing this, and in spite of the protests of the Acharya, whose kindness extended even to his bitterest enemies, chanted the sovereign Mantra 'Om' to counter the magic of Navagupta. Immediately the disease was transferred to that evil-minded Sakta himself, and he died of it. How can one attain happiness by doing evil to great ones intentionally!

The Vision of Gaudapada

(33-53) Sometime after he was free from the disease, the Acharya, while sitting on the sandy bed of Ganga for meditation, saw before him the form of sage Gaudapada. He shone like a night-lotus blooming under the glory of evening clouds reflecting the light of the setting sun. In one hand of his was a Kamandalu of sparkling metal resembling the inside lustre of lotus flowers, while the finger tips of the other counted a rosary of Rudraksha beads, round which honey bees hummed, mistaking them to be blue lotus buds. The Acharya prostrated himself before Gaudapada in great excitement and then stood before him in an attitude of great respect with hands held in salutation. Gaudapada now began to speak, casting all around his glances, which resembled the waves of the Milk Ocean, and the lustre of his smile that excelled the soothing influence of moonlight. He said: "Govindacharya imparted to you the saving knowledge of the Atman, and you have well realised the eternal truth of Sat-chid-ananda, the eternal and untainted Being. You have also acquired many disciples

always attending on you—disciples who have their minds at peace and senses under control and who are endowed with devotion, faith, renunciation and strong urge to have direct experience of Brahman. You have gained mastery over the six instinctive urges of the mind. You have gained proficiency in the six-limbed Yoga. You have acquired the six-fold spiritual excellences. Your mind has become one with the Eternal Being. I hope all these attainments are yours already." To these enquiries of Gaudapada, Sankara answered with great emotion and humility: "Honoured Master! By your grace all those excellences you have mentioned can certainly accrue to me. What is there unattainable for one on whom your gracious look has fallen? A glance of yours can make a fool a scholar, a sinner a saint, a dumb man an eloquent speaker, and a lascivious person a paragon of purity. Who in the world can understand even an iota of your vast and endless greatness? It was only to you that Suka, the great son of Vyasa, imparted the truth of Brahman out of the fulness of his heart. The greatness of that Suka, your teacher, was such that even at birth he was endowed with the knowledge of Brahman. Immediately he was born, he abanonded hearth and home and became an illumined wanderer, so that his father Vyasa had to go after him, calling 'O my son! my son!' And as the father Vyasa, the commentator on the Yoga aphorisms, cried out like this, he, the son Suka, replied in the form of reverberations of voices coming from the trees. To such an extent had that great Suka attained identification, through knowledge, with all existence. You are that limitless receptacle of knowledge that was filled with spiritual inspiration by that illustrious personage. It is, indeed, the summit of good fortune for a devotee of yours like myself that he could see you today face to face." At these words Gaudapada said: "My child, hearing about your unique excellences, I, though unruffled always, have come in the surge of love to meet you. With great joy I heard from Govinda that from your mind has arisen the sun of a commentary that has brought the lotus of my Karika on the Mandukya into full bloom, spreading the fragrance of its import everywhere." Thereupon, the Acharya read out with all humility his commentaries on the Mandukya Upanishad and Gaudapada's Karika on the same. Highly pleased with the commentary, Gaudapada said, "O emperor of the realm of scholarship! On hearing your very

clear and correct interpretation of my Karika, my mind is bursting with joy and I feel an irresistible prompting to give you a boon. Choose whatever you like!" Sankara replied: "When I met you, in whom the splendour of Suka resides, I have received the vision of Mahavishnu Himself. What greater boon can be sought by me whose thought revolves always around that Supreme Being only?" Deathless and desireless, that great sage Gaudapada thereupon disappeared, blessing the Acharya, who spent much of that night narrating to his disciples all that had happened.

Ascending the Throne of Omniscience

(54-61) Next morning, while the Acharya and his disciples were assembled near the banks of the Ganga after their morning rites and duties, some one brought to them the news: "In the world, Jambu Dveepa is the most famous region. In that region Bharata excels all others. In Bharata, Kashmir is the most famous place. For, there, it is said, Mother Sarada is present. In that region there is a temple with four gates dedicated to Sarada. Within is the Throne of Omniscience. As only an omniscient one can occupy that throne, the entrances to it will not be opened to others. Scholars from the East, the West, and the North, who could stand the test to prove their omniscience, have in the past opened the three entrances pertaining to their respective directions. It is said, till now there has been no learned man from the South qualified enough to get the southern entrance opened." On hearing this news, the Acharya, who hailed from the South, felt a prompting to get the entrance opened and efface the stigma on southerners that there never had been a scholar in the South competent to enter through the southern gate to the Throne of Omniscience. So, the Acharya started soon to that Temple of Sarada in Kashmir. As he approached the temple, people who hailed his advent began to exclaim: "O elephants of perverse controversialists! Flee from your forest of dualism. For, here comes Sankara, the lion ruling over the forest of Advaita, with Sannyasa for his terrific teeth, bent upon breaking the foreheads of all of you, elephants of the forest of Dvaita! He is verily like a lion that shatters the foreheads of elephants in rut. By his mere look he will put you, jackals of controversialists, to flight."

Challenge by Scholars

(62-80) As his admirers shouted like this, the Acharya approached the southern entrance with a view to open it, when a set of controversialists stopped him and said: "Where are you going in great haste? First say what you want. Through thoughtless action, you can achieve nothing. Only one who can establish his claim to be omniscient— that is, to be a master of all branches of learning— can go in. He will be tested. Know, O fame seeker, you cannot gain entrance here before that." Now, a proud controversialist, an adherent of the school of Kanada, which holds that there are six categories, approached the Acharya and declared, "In our philosophy, two atoms together form into a new atom of subtlety called Dvayanuka (doubled atom). If you are omniscient, tell me what is it that unites the two Anu's or atoms into one unit. If you cannot give a correct answer, then your claim for omniscience is only a bluff publicised by your disciples." Sankara replied, "That unity is due to something inherent in the atoms." The glorifiers of Kanada then withdrew, saying that the Acharya was correct. Then came forward the representative of the Nyaya school, who said in his pride of scholarship, "Gautama's school differs in the conception of liberation (Mukti) from the school of Kanada. Say what that difference is, if you want to justify your claim to omniscience". Sankara replied: "In the view of Kanada, liberation (Moksha) consists in a state like that of Akasa free from all qualities. In the view of Gautama, it is, in addition, a blissful and sentient condition. In the enumeration of categories, there is a clear distinction— the former has seven and the latter, sixteen. Both accept Iswara (God) as the cause of the world." Thereupon the representative of Gautama's school of Nyaya withdrew. The Samkhya disputant now came forward and said, "Say whether Prakriti (Nature) is independent or dependent on an intelligent entity? If you are omniscient, you must give a correct answer. Then only can you get in." Sankara replied, "The Samkhyas say that Prakriti, constituted of the three Gunas, out of which the universe is formed, is independent. But the Vedantists say that it is dependent on Iswara." The Samkhya thereupon withdrew. Then came the scholars of the famous Buddhist schools of realism and nihilism, declaring, "Without being tested, you cannot enter the temple.

Realism is of two kinds. What is the point of difference between them? And what is the difference between Vijnanavada (idealism) and your philosophy? Only after giving correct answers for these questions can you go into the temple." Sankara replied: "Of the two schools of realism, according to the Sautrantikas it is reason only that apprehends the real nature of things, while the Vaibhasikas consider perception as the main criterion of truth. Both of them, however, accept the doctrine of universal impermanence. The difference between them, therefore, is very little. The Vijnanavadins accept consciousness as a momentary and perishable succession, while the Vedantins maintain it to be unitary and unchanging. The difference between them is vast." Now, the Digambara Jaina approached and asked: "If you are a master of all learning, tell us what is meant by Astikāya in our system." To this, Sankara replied: "The Jainas speak of five Astikāyas—Jivāstikāya, Pudgalāstikāya, Dharmāstikāya, Adharmāstikaya and Ākāsāstikāya. If you have to ask me any other question, do it quickly." After these representatives of non-Vedic schools of thought had turned their back, a scholar of Jaimini's school of Purvamimamsa came forward and put the question: "In Jaimini's doctrine, what is the nature of sound (Sabda)—is it substance (Dravya) or quality (Guna)?" The Acharya replied: "Varna is eternal, all-pervasive, and graspable by the ear; Sabda is its form. Substance (Dravya) is all-pervasive, according to this school."

The Test by Saraswati

(81-92) As the controversialists were satisfied that the Acharya was proficient in all philosophies, they opened the entrance to the temple respectfully and the Acharya entered into it. Holding the hand of Padmapada, he was about to ascend that Throne of Omniscience, when he heard the disembodied voice of Saraswati, the consort of Brahma and the presiding Deity of the temple, challenging him thus, "That you are all-knowing is an already proved fact. Otherwise, how could Viswarupa, who is famed as an incarnation of Brahma, have become your disciple? To ascend this Throne, one should not only be all-knowing but be absolutely pure in life. Do not commit the grave impropriety of ascending this Throne, without reflecting whether you have been absolutely pure in life. In spite of being a Sannyasin, in order to learn the

secrets of sex-life, you lived in sexual relationship with women. Was it proper for you to do so? To ascend this Throne, perfect purity of life is as much needed as all-round learning." To this, the Acharya replied, "From birth, I have done no sin with this body. What was done by another body will not affect this body of mine." The voice of Saraswati became silent, accepting the explanation, and the Acharya now ascended the Throne of Omniscience and shone there, while the spectators began to hymn his praise just as Gargya, Kahola and others did to Yajnavalkya. They sang: "By refuting all the arguments of well-trained and experienced controversialists, you have established your fame in all parts of the country. You are, indeed, a worthy person to the title of Omniscience. Hail, Hail unto the great Sannyasin's ascension to the Saradapitha! Hail, Hail to Sankara of undimmed and undecaying fame!" The vociferous claims of the followers of Kapila and Kanada were drowned in the loud beat of kettle drums proclaiming the victory of the Acharya's Vedanta philosophy. So did the doctrines of Kumarila, Bhaskara and Patanjali either disappear or lose all their former glamour. When Sankara, the luminous sun of knowledge, driving away the darkness of atheistic thought, shines on Saradapitha, where are the Buddhist doctrines, where are the teachings of Kanada, Kapila, Bhatta and Bhaskara? These and all other doctrines have dissolved and disappeared in his brilliance. At the order of their king Indra, the Devas in heaven beat gigantic kettle drums, which in the world reverberated as the bursting sound of clouds and the deep roar of the ocean. They also poured down such a rain of flowers of the heavenly Kalpaka tree, that it is said that for several days Sachi, the consort of Indra, could get no flowers for decorating her coiffured hair.

Fulfilment of Mission and Disappearance at Kedara

(93-99) Thus, for the triumph of his doctrine, and not from considerations of personal glory, did the great Sankara adorn the Throne of Omniscience. After this crowning triumph of his life, he left for Badari with some of his disciples, while deputing the others to Sringagiri and other places. At Badari, he spent some days, teaching his Advaita commentary on the Sutras to some followers of Patanjali's school, who found his doctrines more

acceptable than theirs and, therefore, became his disciples. Thus, teaching his noble doctrines to fit recipients, the Acharya shone like the moon spreading the light of his fame everywhere— a light that brought the cooling peace of spiritual consolation to all who came under its influence. In this way, Sankara, the great incarnation of Siva, reached the thirty-second year of his life, devoted solely to the practice of holiness and execution of noble deeds. He had, during that period, finished the writing of commentaries on Vedantic texts, which received recognition from all learned men and which were, for all time, to help humanity in its quest after holiness and spiritual freedom. He had put down the pride of well-established sectaries who till then commanded the respect of vast numbers of ignorant people. He had also renovated the path for the attainment of salvation, removing all obstacles and closing all dubious diversions that inferior teachers had introduced. What other work could possibly be left for the great Acharya to accomplish? What else remained for him to achieve— for him, whose noble fame surpassed that of universally coveted things like sweet jasmine, fragrant sandal paste, cool moonlight and pearls of lustrous whiteness, and the flow of whose universal benevolence had extinguished the fire of suffering in the hearts of good men? The four quarters could not contain the flood of his fame that came gushing to them. All the worlds got astounded by the unparalleled feats he accomplished. All devotees found their expectations fulfilled in the ways he had shown for the attainment of salvation and for happiness in the world. What more could he, the prince among men, contribute to the welfare of the world?

(100-107) Next, the Acharya went to Kedara, the holy land of Siva, where the heat of sin in men is dispelled and peace generated in their hearts, where the votaries of the Lord feel uplifted from the dangers and difficulties of life. There, the cold was so great that his disciples were not able to bear it. The Acharya, therefore, meditated on Lord Siva for giving them relief, and out from the foot-steps of the Lord came a spring of hot water, which flows as a stream even to this day, declaring the glory of Acharya Sankara. Now there came a concourse of Rishis and Devas with Brahma at their head, to lead this incarnate aspect of Siva back to His pristine state in Sivaloka (Siva's Abode) in the heaven of Kailasa.

The assemblage of luminous chariots filled the heavenly paths. The celestials rained a heavy shower of Mandara flowers over the region and sang the glory of Lord Siva who had taken that form of a Sannyasin: "Thou art the first of Devas. Thou art the destroyer of Tripuras. Thou didst burn Cupid and swallow poison. Thou, the three-eyed one, art the centre from which the origin, the sustenance and the dissolution of the universe take place. Thou hast accomplished the mission for which Thou didst manifest in the world. Pray! Do come now into our midst in Thy heavenly Abode." As the Devas addressed Him thus, the great Lord, stirred to the depth of His being, was ready to ascend to His supreme Abode, when there came and stood before Him the divine Bull Nandi, His vehicle, of swan-like whiteness. Indra and his retinue now raised their voice in a chorus of hymns and began to rain flowers gathered from the heavenly Kalpaka tree, and in the midst of these thrilling occurrences, the great Sannyasin, mounting the back of the divine Bull with Brahma supporting Him, transformed himself into his real form as the great Lord Siva with matted locks and the crescent moon peeping from it. And, as the Devas and the Rishis cried 'Hail unto Him', He attained to His Divine Abode.

Sri Sankaracharya is undoubtedly the most widely known of India's saintly philosophers, both within the country and outside, and there is a constant enquiry for an account of his life . . .

The life of Sankara makes a strong impression of contraries. He is a philosopher and a poet, a savant and a saint, a mystic and a religious reformer. Such diverse gifts did he prossess that different images present themselves, if we try to recall his personality . . . There have been few minds more universal than his.

ISBN 81-7823-342-8

9 788178 233420

Books can be Ordered at www.sriramakrishnamath.org

Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylopore Chennai - 4

email : srkmath@vsnl.com

Sankara Dig Vijaya Rs. 60.00